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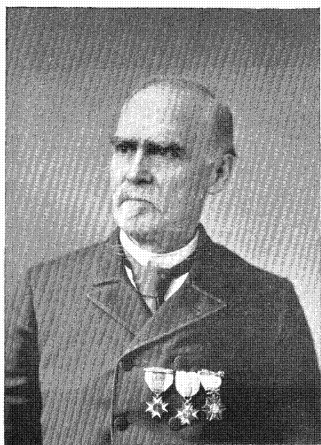
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THE FRIES REBELLION

1798-99

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AN ARMED RESISTANCE TO THE HOUSE TAX LAW, PASSED BY CON-
GRESS, JULY 9, 1798, IN BUCKS AND NORTHAMPTON
COUNTIES, PENNSYLVANIA.



BY

Wm. W. Hart
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AUTHOR OF "EL GRINGO, OR NEW MEXICO AND HER PEOPLE;" "HISTORY OF THE
104TH PENNSYLVANIA REGIMENT;" "LIFE OF GENERAL JOHN LACEY;" "HIS-
TORY OF THE HART FAMILY;" "THE SPANISH CONQUEST OF NEW
MEXICO;" "THE HISTORY OF BUCKS COUNTY, PA.;" "LIFE OF
JOHN DAVIS," AND "HISTORY OF THE DOY-
LESTOWN GUARDS."



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Dedication.

This Volume is Dedicated to the Students of History.

PREFACE.



In presenting this volume to the public, it seems meet and proper the circumstances, under which it was written and published, should be stated.

I purchased the Doylestown (Pa.) *Democrat* 1858, and, being interested in local history, began collecting the facts, relating to the armed resistance to the house-tax law of 1798, and writing it up for my paper. I had heard a good deal of it in my youth and was curious to know more. It had its birth in Milford township, Bucks county, Pa.; thence extending into the adjoining townships of Northampton, and, in unwritten history, was known as the "Milford Rebellion." There is no evidence that the people of Montgomery county had any part in it.

I visited the locality where Fries and his "insurgents," as they were called, operated; interviewed his son Daniel, his only surviving child, then an old man of over 70, and others who lived in that section at the time of the trouble, hunted up all the known records and examined the newspaper files of the period. By the winter of 1859-60 I had collected considerable material and published portions of it in my newspaper. Since then additional matter has been added to the text, and many new facts, pertinent to the subject, are embodied in foot notes.

Being satisfied the facts, relating to this interesting episode, would have been lost, had they not been collected when they were; and believing them of sufficient interest to be preserved

in some more enduring way, then attaches to the columns of a weekly newspaper, I determined to publish them in book form. The manuscript was prepared for the press several years ago, but the publication was deferred, from time to time until the present, and it is now given to the public with some misgivings. The events narrated are not only interesting in themselves, but too suggestive of the friction between the people and their newly established government, to allow them to become lost to the student of history. I have several friends to thank, including Messrs. John W. Jordan,* Charles Broadhead, Bethlehem, and Ellwood Roberts, Norristown, in the matter of furnishing illustrations for the volume.

W. W. H. DAVIS.

Doylestown, Pa., March 4, 1899.

*Pennsylvania Historical Society.

THREATENING LETTER.



The following is a translation of the threatening letter facing page 12, sent, by an insurgent, to Captain Jarrett and is one of the earliest exhibitions of Kukluxism extant :

A sure warning (certain report) to you John Sheret if you have already advised the people who are for liberty that they should not go armed to Bethlehem, you need not discourage others any more as you are already a cursed *stambler* as are many others in this neighborhood. Your brother Henry also said that the people should not have done that to go against the government. He was scared when he came to Bethlehem and saw the people with weapons. (A line of the original here cannot be translated.) So Earl* is a devil as you and John Sheret. I say in case of an outbreak I will burn your house and barn and will shoot you and your brother dead wherever I shall detect you cursed *stamblers*. If it would not be for your brother Henry most surely Bethlehem would receive its deserving reward. The cursed advice would be frustrated. And you are never safe in your house. You and Earl* are cursed *stambles* knaves one as the other else you would not dissuade the people who are for liberty.

These are the weapons for your slaughter.

*Eyerley.

THREATENING LETTER



Dear Sir,
I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. in relation to the above matter.
I am sorry to hear that you are not satisfied with the result of the investigation.
I have been very busy lately, and have not had time to devote to this matter as much as I would like.
I am sure that you will understand my position.
I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
J. H. Smith





The Fries Rebellion.



CHAPTER I.

Cause of the Rebellion; John Fries.

Between the close of the Revolution and the end of the Century, three events transpired in the United States that gave serious alarm to the friends of republican institutions.

The first of these, known in history as "Shays' Rebellion," was an unlawful combination in Massachusetts, 1786, directed against the State Government. Its head and front was Daniel Shays,¹ who had been a Captain in the Continental army, and left behind him the reputation of a brave and faithful officer. The outbreak was soon quelled, but not before some of the misguided participants had paid the penalty with their lives. The second event, in the order of time, was the "Whiskey Insurrection,"² in the southwestern counties of Pennsylvania, 1792. It reached such magnitude, by the fall of 1794, that

¹ Daniel Shays, born 1747, at Hopkinton, Mass., served as ensign at the battle of Bunker's Hill, and attained the rank of Captain in the Continental Army. In 1786 he took part in the popular movement in Western Massachusetts for the redress of alleged grievances, and became the leader in the rebellion which bears his name. Shays, after being pardoned, removed to Vermont and thence to New York, where he died Sept. 29, 1825. In his old age he was allowed a pension for his services during the Revolution.

² The "Whiskey Insurrection" was a disturbance in the south-western section of Pennsylvania, caused by Congress imposing a tax on all ardent spirits distilled in the United States three years previously. The object of the tax was to improve the revenues of the government. It is charged that Genet, the French minister, and his partizans incited the people of the distilling regions to resist the tax collectors. The disaffected rose in arms. Washington issued two proclamations warning the insurgents to disperse but, instead of obeying, they fired upon and captured the officers of the government. A military force 15,000 strong, was then organized and sent into the disturbed district, to enforce the law, but the insurgents had already scattered when the troops arrived. The whiskey tax was a measure of the Federal party.

President Washington sent a large body of troops, under Governor Henry Lee,³ of Virginia, into the disaffected district. The force was so imposing the insurgents abandoned their organization and returned to their homes. The third attempt was that of which we write, the "Fries Rebellion." This took place in contiguous parts of Bucks⁴ and Northampton counties, in the Fall and Winter of 1798-99, and is so called from the name of the leader, John Fries, who was mainly instrumental in creating this opposition to the Federal authority. In each case the disturbance was caused in whole, or in part, by what the people considered an unjust and unlawful tax, and they resisted putting it in force. In the two latter cases the assessments to be made were of an unusual character, though not heavy in amount, and the opposition to it was caused, no doubt, by want of correct information, and not a settled design to interfere with the execution of the law. The history of the Fries Rebellion proves, quite conclusively, the outbreak was of this character, and, if proper means had been taken by the authorities to explain the law and its necessity, to the disaffected, the extreme measures taken by the general government need not have been resorted to. It was fortunate, however, the trouble was brought to a close without the loss of life or bloodshed, and the bitterness engendered was not permanent.

During the Administration of John Adams, the frequent depredations of the French upon our commerce, and their disregard of our rights on the high seas, as a neutral power to the sanguinary conflict then devastating Europe, induced the belief that war with France was unavoidable. Congress, ac-

³ Governor Henry Lee, Virginia, who commanded the troops of the Government in the "Whiskey Insurrection," was the famous "Light Horse Harry" of the Revolution, and rendered Washington distinguished service as a partizan cavalry officer. He was born in Westmoreland county, Va., January 29, 1756. He was appointed by Congress to deliver the funeral oration on Washington, 1799.

⁴ Bucks, one of the three original counties of Pennsylvania, and organized with Philadelphia and Chester, 1683, lies in the south-eastern corner of the State, Northampton joining it on the northwest and Montgomery, cut off from Philadelphia, 1782, bounds Bucks on the southwest. The district, where opposition to the House tax law prevailed, was settled mainly by Germans; there was no opposition to speak of outside of a few townships in the upper end of Bucks and the lower end of Northampton. Berks was formed from Chester, Philadelphia and Lancaster, 1798.

cordingly, made preparation for such emergency should it arise. The military and naval forces of the country were increased, and General Washington, then living in retirement at Mount Vernon, was appointed to the command of the armies about to be called into the field. In view of the impending danger to the country, Congress took such other measures as the President thought requisite, some of which clothed him with almost despotic power. The act, known as the "Alien and Sedition Laws," gave him authority to send obnoxious persons out of the country, at pleasure, and to place others in arrest accused of speaking, or writing, in disrespectful terms of the government. In connection with these measures Congress made provision to carry on the war, now thought to be near at hand, by laying a direct tax to be assessed and collected by agents appointed by the Federal government.

On July 9, 1798, an act was passed providing "for the valuation of lands and dwelling houses and the enumeration of slaves within the United States." For making the valuation and enumeration, required by the act, the States were divided into districts, and, for each district, a commissioner was appointed by the President with a fixed salary. It was made the duty of the commissioners to sub-divide these districts into assessment districts, and, for each, appoint one principal and as many assistants as might be required. The assessors were to make out a list of houses, lands and slaves, and afterward to value and assess them. On July 14 Congress passed an additional act, entitled "An Act to lay and collect a direct tax within the United States," fixing the amount to be raised at \$2,000,000, of which \$237,177.72 was the portion allotted to Pennsylvania. The rates of assessments to be made under this act were as follows: Where the dwelling and outhouses, on a lot not exceeding two acres, were valued at more than \$100 and not exceeding \$500, there was to be assessed a sum equal to two-tenths of one per cent. on the valuation. As the houses and lands increased in value the rates were increased in proportion, so that a house, worth \$30,000, would pay a tax equal to one per cent. of its value. By this means rich and poor alike contributed their share of the burden according to

their ability to pay. Upon each slave there was assessed a tax of 50 cents. The fourth section of the act provided for the appointment of collectors, and the duties were to be discharged under instructions from the Secretary of the Treasury.

Upon the announcement of the passage of these acts of Congress, and their publication, discontent began to manifest itself. They were denounced as unconstitutional, unjust and oppressive, and the government charged with acting in a tyrannical manner. The odium already resting on Mr. Adams' Administration was increased, and new enemies made on all sides. Politicians, who seized upon it to bring the Administration into disrepute, were governed by selfish purposes, but we must credit the masses with honest motives. Following so soon, after the passage of the Alien and Sedition Laws, gave the House Tax Law greater unpopularity than it really merited, or would have received at any other time. The feeling of the country was very much aroused before its passage, and this added fuel to the flame.

The law was violently denounced in Pennsylvania as soon as its provisions were known. At first the opposition took the form of noisy declamation, and the application of harsh epithets to the President and his Cabinet, and was mainly confined to the counties of Bucks, Montgomery, Northampton and Berks in the eastern part of the State. From passive resistance the opposition gradually assumed the shape of overt acts. In a few instances, and before any matured plan had been agreed upon, the officers were prevented by threats from making the assessments, and, in others, were hooted at and ridiculed. So odious did it make the Administration in Bucks and Northampton, that these counties positively refused to furnish their quota, under a law recently passed, for increasing the military force of the country, and not a man was furnished by them. The opposition had assumed such alarming character by the Winter and Spring of 1799 the President deemed it his duty to send a large body of troops into these counties to quell the disturbance and enforce the law. In order to give our readers an intelligent and accurate account of this out-

break, it will be necessary to take up the thread of events from the passage of the acts of Congress that led to it.

Immediately on the passage of the law, the Secretary of the Treasury took the proper steps to carry it out. The act of July 9 divided Pennsylvania into nine districts, the third being composed of the counties of Bucks and Montgomery, and the fifth of Northampton, Luzerne and Wayne, with the following named commissioners:

1st District, Israel Wheeler,	5th District, Jacob Eyerley,*
2d " Paul Zantzenger,	6th " Michael Schmyser,
3d " Seth Chapman,*	7th " Thomas Grant, Jr.,
4th " Collinson Reed,	8th " Samuel Davidson,
9th District, Isaac Jenkinson.	

Jacob Eyerley, commissioner for the fifth district, and a resident of Northampton, was commissioned sometime in the month of August and took the oath of office. Almost as soon as qualified, he was requested, by the Secretary of the Treasury, to find suitable persons to serve as assessors in his division. He had no trouble as far as the counties of Luzerne and Wayne were concerned, but, in Northampton, only two persons were named in connection with the appointment. There appeared to be a general indisposition among the people to accept office under the law.

The fourth section of the act of July 9 required the commissioners, as soon as possible after their appointment, to meet and make provision for carrying out the act. The board assembled at Reading,⁷ Berks county, October 22, nearly all the members present. Each commissioner presented a plan of his division and divided it into a suitable number of assessment districts. They also furnished a list of persons qualified for assessors, which was forwarded to the Secretary of the Treasury who was authorized to reduce the

* Seth Chapman, commissioner for the Third District, and citizen of Bucks county, received his commission and instruction early in the autumn and immediately qualified. He was a relative of James Chapman and possibly a brother.

* Jacob Eyerley was a Moravian and a man of some influence.

⁷ Reading, the county seat of Berks, was laid out in the Autumn of 1748, on a tract of 450 acres for which warrants had been taken out by John and Samuel Finney, 1733. It is now a prosperous and wealthy city of some 70,000 inhabitants.

number. A form of warrant was agreed upon and signed by the commissioners. The assessors were ordered to meet at an early day, when the commissioners would qualify and give them the necessary instructions.

Bucks county was divided into two collection districts, one composed of the twelve upper townships, for which were appointed one principal and five assistants; James Chapman,⁹ Richland, being the principal, and John Rodrock,¹⁰ Plumstead; Everhard Foulke,¹⁰ Richland, Cephas Childs,¹¹ Samuel Clark, Milford, and one other assistant. Childs took the oath of office November 5, and no doubt the others were qualified about the same time. The assessors met at Rodrock's the latter part of December, after being qualified. Here the last preliminaries were arranged prior to making the attempt to carry the law into effect. Each assessor was given charge of two townships, and allowed a choice of the ones he would assess.

⁹ James Chapman was born in Springfield township, and at this time was living in Richland, although I do not know when he moved into it. He lived on a farm some years ago the property of P. Mayer, on the road to Milford Square, one mile west of Quakertown. He belonged to Richland meeting, 1781, when he and ten other leading members were disowned for subscribing the oath of allegiance to the Colonies. The Chapman family is one of the oldest in the county, the first ancestor in America immigrating from England and settling in Wrightstown township, 1684. The Hon. Henry Chapman, lately deceased, Doylestown, was a lienal descendant of the first settler. Seth Chapman, one of the assessors, was a member of the same family. For a further account of James Chapman see chapter 9th.

¹⁰ John Rodrock was a resident of Plumstead township when appointed, but I do not know that he was born there. He kept the tavern at what is now Plumsteadville, on the Easton pike, then known as "Rodrock's tavern," and this is where the assessors held their first meeting. He kept it down to about seventy-five years ago, and was the only house there. In 1762 it was called "James Hart's tavern." Rodrock owned about 300 acres of land in the vicinity, at his death, more than a half century ago. The village now contains 25 dwellings, with tavern, store, a brick church and extensive carriage works.

¹⁰ Everard Foulke was a member of the Foulke family, Richland, in the neighborhood of Quakertown, and was probably appointed from that township. They were Friends. His first ancestor in this country was Edward Foulke, who came from North Wales, 1638, and settled in Gwynedd township, Montgomery county, and from there removed to Richland. The late Benjamin Foulke, Quakertown, was a descendant of the same common ancestor as Everard.

¹¹ Cephas Childs, or Child, the correct spelling, was of a Plumstead family, but I do not know that he lived there when appointed. A Cephas Child, or Childs, was there as early as about 1716, and was a Friend. He was a member of the Assembly, 1747-48. Among the descendants of the first settler, was the late Colonel Cephas G. Child, Philadelphia. A Cephas Child died in Plumstead in 1815, at the age of 90, probably his son, or grandson.

When it became known the assessments were actually to be made, and the tax collected under the "odious" law, the hostility of the people, which had somewhat abated since its passage, broke out anew in some localities. The excitement soon reached fever heat. The tax became the general subject of conversation throughout the country, and was discussed in the taverns, stores, at all public gatherings, and at every point where two or more persons came together. As is always the case in times of high excitement, the authors of the law were denounced in unmeasured terms, and both its object and provisions misrepresented. The most extravagant stories were put in circulation as to the intention of the government, and such a state of fear had seized upon the minds of the middle and lower classes, people were really alarmed for their personal safety. Many considered Mr. Adams a despot, and the act was viewed as the most oppressive that had ever disgraced a statute book. In this condition of things it is not in the least strange that a determination to resist the law should manifest itself. The opposition appears to have been more general in Milford¹⁹ township, in Bucks, and in some of the border townships of Northampton county, where the inhabitants early made open demonstration to resist the assessors. In Milford the officers were wholly unable to comply with the law, and there the houses remained unassessed for some time after the assessment had been made in other parts of the district. The most active man in stirring up opposition to the Federal authorities, and who, in fact, was the head and front of all the disturbance, was John Fries, Milford, who had the countenance and support of many of his neighbors and friends, of whom John Getman and Frederick Heany, after himself, were the boldest and most active participants in the rebellion.

It would be an easy matter, were we disposed to indulge in romance and present fictitious characters to the reader, to convert the leaders in this disturbance into heroes and clothe them with imaginary qualities; but, as we profess to deal

¹⁹ Milford township, in the northwest corner of Bucks county, was settled by Germans as early as 1725, and organized, 1734. It is one of the largest and most populous townships in the county, and is a fine agricultural region.

only with facts, and intend to write a correct account of the outbreak, 1798-99, such license is forbidden. Fries, Heany and Getman were plain, honest Germans only, and it is extending ordinary charity to suppose them to have been governed by sincere motives in the course they took.

John Fries, the leading spirit of the insurrection and came of parentage in the lower walks of life, was born in Hatfield¹³ township, Montgomery county, about 1750. At 20 he was married to Margaret Brunner, daughter of David Brunner, White Marsh,¹⁴ near Mather's Mill.¹⁵ John was brought up to work, and, when old enough, was apprenticed to the coopering trade, which he learned. At twenty-five himself and wife, and their two children, removed to Bucks county settling in Milford township. We are not informed as to the exact locality, but were told by his son Daniel that Joseph Galloway¹⁶ gave him permission to build a house on his land at Boggy Creek, and occupy it as long as he wished, which offer he accepted. We have no means of knowing what length of time Fries lived there, nor when he changed his residence, but, at the time of the outbreak, we find him living in a small

¹³ Hatfield township, Montgomery county, is bounded on the northeast by Bucks county. It was laid out about 1741 and probably derived its name from the parish and town of Hatfield, Hertfordshire, England. The population is over 2000. In 1785 it contained one tavern, two grist mills, one saw mill and one tannery. It is $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles long by 3 miles wide, with an area of 7100 acres.

¹⁴ Whitemarsh township, Montgomery, lies in the Schuylkill Valley. It has an area of 8697 acres, and is one of the most populous townships in the county. In the quality of its limestone, marble and iron ores it is not surpassed in the State. "Whitemarsh lime," for whitewashing, finds its way all over the country. It was settled as early as 1685. It is rich in Revolutionary incidents, and, within its limits, some important movements were made by the two opposing armies in Fall of 1777 and Winter of 1777-78. It is cut by the North Pennsylvania railroad and is twelve miles from Philadelphia.

¹⁵ Mather's mill is in Whitemarsh township, Montgomery county, near the intersection of the Bethlehem and Skippack turnpike, a mile below Fort Washington. It was built by Edward Farmer, 1705; rebuilt, 1814, by Mather, and is now or was lately owned by the Otterson estate. The mill is on the Wissahickon creek. Edward Farmer came to America with his father, 1685, and settled in Whitemarsh. He became prominent in affairs, and died November 3, 1745, in his 73d year.

¹⁶ The Galloways came from Maryland to Philadelphia, where Joseph was born about 1730 and marrying Grace Growden, removed to Bucks county. He owned a large landed estate in Bucks that came through his wife. He abandoned the Whig cause during the Revolution, and went to England, where he died, 1803. He was active in the early part of the struggle; was a member of the first American Congress, 1774, and, at that time, no man stood higher in the Province. He was a lawyer, and a man of great ability.

log house near the Sumneytown road, two miles from Charles-town," on a lot that belonged to William Edwards, father of Caleb Edwards," deceased, Quakertown." He probably did not follow the coopering business long, if at all, after his removal into Bucks county, for the earliest information we have of him shows he was then persuing the calling of a vendue cryer, which he followed to the day of his death, and for which he seems to have been especially adapted. This occupation led him to travel all over his own, and neighboring townships, affording him an opportunity of becoming well acquainted with the country and the people. He had ten children: Solomn, John, Daniel, a second John, and a fifth which died in infancy before it had been named; Mary, Elizabeth, Sarah, Catharine and Margaret. Of these ten children Solomon and Daniel were the last to die, both aged men, who had already reached more than man's allotted years. Daniel, the younger of the two, was born at "Boggy Creek," May, 1782.

When the contest between Great Britain and her American Colonies came on, 1776, John Fries espoused the cause of his country, and became an active patriot. He was already enrolled in the militia and had command of a company. We

¹⁷ Charlestown, now called Trumbauersville, a place of some sixty families, is built for half a mile along the road leading from Philadelphia to Allentown. At the time of the Fries Rebellion it could not have had more than one or two dwellings, besides the tavern, now known as the Eagle. It is the seat of cigar factories, and, at one time, turned out 2,000,000 a year. The first church building was erected 1769; rebuilt, 1805, and again 1868. It is now a Union church.

¹⁸ Caleb Edwards was probably a descendant of John Edwards, who came with his wife from Abington, Montgomery county, to the neighborhood of Quakertown about 1730 with the Morrisses, Heackocks, Jamisons, Joneses and others. He must have been appointed from Richland or a neighboring township.

¹⁹ Quakertown, Richland township, is at the intersection of the Milford Square and Newtown, Hellertown and Philadelphia roads, all opened at an early day. Here a little hamlet began to form over a century and half ago, and as the settlers were principally members of the Society of Friends, the name "Quakertown" was given it. A tavern was opened as early as 1770; a post office, 1803; a public library founded 1795; and it was incorporated into a borough in 1854. The population was 863 in 1870, and 2169 in 1890. In 1874 the borough limits were extended to include Richland Centre, a village that had grown up about the station on the North Penn. Railroad, a mile to the east. The population of the borough is about 3000. Quakertown is the centre of a rich and populous country.

are not able to say at what period he was first called into service, but we know he was on active duty 1777, for, in the Fall of that year, his company being of the militia was called out from Bucks county to re-enforce the Continental Army, and was with Washington at White Marsh and Camp Hill.²⁰ In the Spring of the following year he commanded a company in the action at Crooked Billet,²¹ under General John Lacey,²² and shared the dangers and defeat of the day. Nearly twenty years later, we find him in command of a company of militia, from this county, in the Whiskey Insurrection. In these military positions it is to be presumed he served his country faithfully.

²⁰ "Camp Hill" is an elevation in Whitemarsh township, Montgomery county, Pa., and so named because a portion of the Continental Army occupied it during the Fall, 1777, in the operations following the occupation of Philadelphia by the British. It lies on the left of the North Pennsylvania Railroad below Fort Washington Station, the next station below it being known as "Camp Hill," on the west side of the railroad. The contiguous country was the scene of military operations of that period by Washington's army.

²¹ The "Crooked Billet," the present Hatboro, a village of a thousand inhabitants, is in Moreland township, Montgomery county, Pa., half a mile from the Bucks county line, on the North-East Pennsylvania Railroad. It has a bank, a weekly newspaper, an academy, three churches, and a valuable library, founded, 1755. It is thought to have been first settled by John Dawson, who, with his wife and daughter, and probably two sons, came from London to Pennsylvania, 1710. He was a hatter and a member of Friends' Meeting. The place was called "Crooked Billett" from a crooked stick of wood painted on the sign that hung at the tavern door in ye olden time.

²² John Lacey, captain in the Continental Army and subsequently a Brigadier General of militia in the Revolution, was born in Buckingham township, Bucks county, Pa., 1755. The family were members of the Society of Friends, and immigrated from the Isle of Wight, England, and settled in Wrightstown among the first settlers. He was commissioned captain in the 4th Pennsylvania regiment, commanded by Col. Anthony Wayne, January 5, 1776; serving in the campaign in Canada of that year, returning home on the recruiting service in December. He shortly afterward resigned his commission, because of some unjust treatment by Colonel Wayne, but continued his activity in the cause of the Colonies. He was commissioned a Sub-Lieutenant of Bucks county, March 22, 1777; a Brigadiere General of the State, January 9, 1778, before he was 23, taking the field shortly afterward. During that Winter and Spring he had command of the country between the Delaware and Schuylkill, and rendered efficient service. The action at the Crooked Billet took place May 1, 1778. In 1779 General Lacey was chosen a member of the Executive Council of the State and, as such, served for two years. The 18th of January, 1781, he married a daughter of Colonel Thomas Reynolds, New Mills, now Pemberton, N. J., whither he removed the Fall of that year, or beginning of 1782. He entered into the iron business, and died there February 17, 1814. The late Dr. William Darlington, West Chester, Pa., married a daughter of General Lacey.

At the period of which we write, Fries was about fifty years of age. In person rather small in stature and spare, but active, hardy and well made. He was without education, except being able to read and write, with a knowledge of the rudiments of arithmetic. Nature had endowed him with good natural abilities, and he possessed a shrewd and intelligent mind. He was an easy and fluent talker, and somewhat noted for his humour and cunning; was possessed of good hard sense, and, had his mind been properly cultivated, would doubtless have been a man of mark. Personally he was brave and resolute, and unknown to fear. He is said to have possessed a species of rude eloquence which was very engaging, and gave him great control over the multitude. He was a sworn enemy to all kinds of oppression, fancied or real, and was esteemed a quiet and inoffensive man until this outbreak aroused the latent fires within him, made him notorious, and his name a terror to the Administration of Mr. Adams. He had brown hair, quick and steady black eyes, of which an old neighbor, and one who formerly knew him well, told us "were as keen as the eyes of a rabbit." He had a pleasant disposition, was well liked by all, and, with many, quite a favorite. His character for honesty was above suspicion, and he was considered a sober man, though occasionally indulged in strong drink. These personal and other qualities gave him, to a considerable degree, the confidence of the community in which he lived, and enabled him to exercise a controlling influence over his neighbors and friends.

In following his occupation of vendue cryer he generally traversed the county on horseback, and, in all his wanderings, was accompanied by a small black dog named "Whiskey," to which he was greatly attached. When he entered a house it was his habit to call for "Whiskey," when the faithful little animal would come and take a seat by his side and remain until his master got up to go away. Master and dog were inseparable companions, and aged persons who knew Fries stated to us that his approach was often heralded some time before he came in sight by the appearance of "Whiskey" trotting along in advance. The favorite little dog, as will be seen, be-

fore we conclude, was the means of the betrayal of his master into the hands of his enemies.

Next to John Fries, Frederick Heaney and John Getman were the most active instigators of the disturbance. They were both residents of Milford township at the time, the former living two miles from Charlestown, the latter within half a mile of Fries' house; they were tailors by trade, and in an humble condition in life. Of their history we have been able to learn but little. Heaney was born at what is now "Stover's Mill,"³³ Rockhill township, but we do not know at what period he changed his residence to Milford. At one time he kept the tavern at Hagersville,³⁴ of which Christian Hager was landlord forty years ago, but we have not been able to learn the date of his residence at this place. After his pardon by Mr. Adams, Heaney returned to his home, Milford township, whence he removed to Plainfield,³⁵ Northampton county, where he died.³⁶ He gained there not only a respectable, but a somewhat influential standing in the community. He was appointed justice of the peace, and also commanded a volunteer company, which his grandson, George Heaney, commanded, 1860. After his death, which did not take place until he

³³ Stover's Mill is in Rockhill township, Bucks county, a few miles from Sellersville, on the North Pennsylvania Railroad, and was owned by a member of the family of that name a few years ago.

³⁴ Hagersville is situated on the Old Bethlehem Road, in the north-west corner of Rockhill township. It has a store, tavern, the usual village mechanics, and some dozen dwellings. At this point the road is the dividing line between Bedminster and Rockhill townships. The village took its name from Colonel George Hager, a prominent man and politician over half a century ago. He was a candidate for sheriff 1836.

³⁵ Plainfield township, Northampton county, was settled as early as 1730 and organized shortly after 1752, but the records of its organization are lost. It was a frontier township of Bucks county at the time of its organization.

³⁶ We were told by a descendant of Frederick Heaney that he was of German descent, as his name implies, his father, Johannes Horning, having immigrated from the Palatinate about 1742, and settled at what was afterward known as "Heaney's Mill," Rockhill township, Bucks county. Frederick was born there August 18, 1769. At the beginning of the present century he removed to Northampton county, where he died, 1818. Governor Simon Snyder commissioned him justice of the peace, for a district of Northampton, composed of the townships of Upper and Lower Mount Bethel and Plainfield, July 27, 1809, which office he held until his death. He was buried at Plainfield Church, near the Wind Gap. A number of his descendants live in Monroe and Northampton counties.

Handwritten text, likely a letter or document, written in cursive script. The text is mirrored across the page, suggesting it is a reproduction of a document that was scanned and then mirrored. The handwriting is dense and fills most of the page.

FACSIMILE OF A THREATENING LETTER TO A WOMAN

REPRODUCED BY THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Im gewissten Bewußt an Dich Johan, sobald
wan Du schon Im bit ab gewoten hast Im
vor Dir vorisat steh. Das wir nicht mit gewore
salten noch bestrafen geseh so bräust
Du niemand. ab waten war Du schon ein
brutlinster Stumler bist wir es noch
wir in Du nachbar, hast das und Im
bunde freies hat auf geseh das sollten
Dir bit nicht thun sollten das wir gegen
Das geworment geseh es war durchforde
wir es in bestrafen geseh was und das
Dir bit nicht gewore geseh und Du, schwang
das hat auf so ein gewasht wider das
so ist ein Insat Du freeli wir ist und Du
Johan, sobald sag, ist was es ein auf bestraf
nicht so kann es Dir fass und schme
wer und nicht Du und Dein bunde das

FACSIMILE OF A THREATENING NOTICE ISSUED DURING THE FREAS' REBELLION.

ORIGINAL IN THE COLLECTION OF JOHN W. JORDAN, PHILADELPHIA.

wie ich dich stundtlich mich beschlachten
schmecke war es nicht für dein brüder
brüder war gewalt so fort beschaffen, die
das brüder lön gicht das beschlachten
beschaffen war beschaffen worden
und ich soll nicht sitzen in einem fang
ich und der nicht ist ein beschlachten
schmecke gicht wir der andere fang
indem ich den brüder nicht ab kommen
die für die beschlachten sind



Das ist gewalt für mich
zu beschlachten

had reached a green old age, his widow was twice married, and died in Plainfield, 1855, at the age of eighty-nine years. He had three sons, Charles, Samuel and Enoch, and one daughter, Elizabeth. It is related by his descendants that while the troops were in pursuit of him, a party of soldiers came to his house one night, when his wife was alone, except her little daughter, Elizabeth. They heard of threats against his life, and, hearing them coming, she jumped out of bed and put a spike over the door to prevent them getting in, and, leaving her child in the house, ran out the back door and across the fields to alarm a neighbor. When she returned with help the soldiers were gone. This child was Mrs. Edmonds, living, 1860, in Bushkill township, Northampton county, whose son, Jacob B. Edmonds, resided at Quakertown.

Getman is supposed to have been born in Rockhill township, also, but we have not been able to learn anything of his history. His brother George died near Sellersville, Bucks county, March 4, 1855, at the advanced age of 92 years, 2 months and 10 days, respected by all his friends and neighbors. He, likewise, was arrested during the trouble; was tried and convicted but received a much lighter sentence than his brother John, being fined one hundred dollars and sentenced to undergo an imprisonment of 6 months. Heaney was the owner of a small house and lot. These two men were the advisors and confederates of John Fries, Getman being the most in his confidence. They lacked the intelligence and shrewdness of their leader, but were active in the cause and rendered him important service. Such were the three men who were the head and front of the "Fries Rebellion." Thus we have related the cause of the rebellion, with some account of the principal actors in it, and, in the next chapter, we shall give our readers a brief history of the overt acts of the insurgents.





The Fries Rebellion.



CHAPTER II.

The Insurgents Prepare to Resist the Law.

John Fries was probably the first to array himself against the law, immediately upon its passage and promulgation. His own intense hostility begat the desire that his neighbors and friends should agree with him in feeling, and he labored with great zeal to this end. When going about the county crying vendues, he was careful to sound the people as to how they stood upon the subject of the new tax, and was never backward in expressing his own opinion. From a warm supporter of Mr. Adams and his Administration, he suddenly became their most bitter enemy, giving vent to his feelings in terms of unmeasured denunciation. He reasoned with, persuaded, and threatened all and seemed to make it his business to create enemies to the act. He was thus active during the Fall months of 1798, and, by the end of the year, had raised a fierce opposition to the law and those who were to carry it into execution. He was particularly hostile to the house-tax, and declared openly that no assessments should be made in Milford township, nor tax collected if he could prevent it. We were informed by his son Daniel, then about eighteen, and had a distinct recollection of the events transpiring, that several private meetings were held at his father's house before any public demonstration was made. His friends and neighbors met there to talk about the law, and determine, in a quiet manner, what was best to be done. At these conferences Fries always took the lead, and his stronger mind assisted to mould the opinion of others.

The time had now arrived when some more active measures must be taken, and opinion changed to deeds. The period approached when the assessors were to commence their duties, and some public demonstration was necessary to prevent them carrying the law into effect. With this object in view, about the first of February, 1799, notices, without any names signed to them, were put up at various places in the township, calling a public meeting for Friday, the eighth, at the public house of John Klein, on the road leading to Gary's tavern, two miles southwest from Charlestown. On the day appointed, a number of persons assembled at the place of meeting late in the afternoon. The two most active and noisy men present were John Fries and George Mitchel,¹ who then kept the public house more recently occupied by Eli L. Zeigler, at the west end of Charlestown. This tavern was one of the places where the mal contents of the neighborhood assembled at evenings to talk over their grievances. Few, if any, at the meeting appear to have had a very definite idea of what should be done; they disliked the house-tax and were opposed to paying it themselves, or permitting others to do so; but, beyond this, there was no plan of opposition, at this time. The law was discussed and its authors denounced in violent terms.

Some expressed a doubt whether the bill had yet become a law. The newspapers of the day mentioned that an amendment had lately passed Congress, which seemed to confuse the understanding of the people, and rendered them undecided as to whether the law was actually in force. After the matter had been sufficiently considered and the sense of the meeting fully explained, Fries, with the assistance of the publican, Mitchel, drew up a paper that was approved and signed by about fifty of those present. What the exact import of this paper was has never been determined, as neither the original nor a copy fell into the hands of the authorities. It is supposed, however, to have contained merely a statement of the views of the signers upon the subject of the tax, and their determination to oppose the execution of the law. Before ad-

¹ We are not able to learn anything further of George Mitchell than is mentioned here.

journing, however, a resolution was passed requesting the assessors not to come into the township to make the assessment, until the people were better informed whether the law was really in force; and one Captain Kuyder appointed to serve a copy of the resolution upon them. Having transacted the business which brought them together, the people quietly dispersed and returned to their homes. The meeting was conducted in the most orderly and peaceable manner, and there was no appearance of disturbance on the part of anyone.

Our readers will bear in mind, that Mr. Chapman, commissioner for the counties of Bucks and Montgomery, met the assessors of the former county at the public house of Mr. Rodrock, the latter end of December, to deliver to them their instructions how to proceed in the assessments. Immediately after this meeting, these officers commenced the assessment in the respective townships assigned them. They proceeded without any trouble, or appearance of opposition, in all the townships but Milford, and even there the people, notwithstanding the late agitation and excitement against the law, quietly acquiesce in its execution. It is true they did not like it, and would rather have avoided paying the tax, but they had abandoned all intention of resisting the law. Childs and Clark had both been appointed for Milford, and, before separating, fixed upon a day when they would begin in that township. Childs had also one or two other townships assigned him, and, it was arranged between them, they should assist each other, two days at a time, alternately. As Childs had already made some assessments in his own district, he agreed to help Clark whenever he should be ready to begin the work. Before the meeting adjourned at Rodrock's, the principal assessor named an early day to meet again, and make return of what they had done. Mr. Childs went to assist Clark according to agreement, but, when he reached his house, finding the latter was not able to go on with the assessments, he returned to finish up his own district. In Milford the excitement was still running high; and as threats of serious injury had been made against the assessors, who were forbidden to enter the township, they declined to attempt it.

Fries and his friends had inflamed the minds of the people to such degree, that in some parts of the township they were almost in a condition to take up arms. The assessors met at Rodrock's, to make returns, on February 6, but as they did not complete their business that day they adjourned to meet on the 16th.

In the unsettled condition of things in Milford, the principal assessor, James Chapman, determined to take some steps to satisfy the people of that township in relation to the tax. For this purpose he thought it advisable to have a public meeting called at some convenient place, where he would explain the law, but not trusting altogether to his own judgment in the matter, he went to George Mitchel's on Monday, February 11, and consulted him. The latter agreeing with the principal assessor, he was requested to lend his assistance in getting up the meeting and assented. Word was sent to Jacob Hoover,² who owned and lived at a mill on Swamp creek, on the road leading from Trumbauersville to Spinnertown, about one mile west of the former place, and the same later occupied by Jonas Graber,³ to give notice of the meeting to the people of his neighborhood; and also to inform them they would be permitted to select their own assessor, and that any capable man whom they might name would be qualified. The offer, however, did not meet with much favor in that section of the township, and the people declined to have anything to do with it. There seemed to be a general disposition, among the friends of Mr. Adams in the township, to have a public meeting called notwithstanding the failure of the first attempt—to endeavor to reconcile matters; and Israel Roberts and Samuel Clark both saw Mitchell upon the subject. A few days after, Mr. Chapman again sent word to Mitchell to advertise a meeting, which he accordingly did, and

² The Hoovers, or Hubers, immigrated from Switzerland between 1750 and 1760, and settled in Milford township. The father's name we do not know, but his wife's was Ann, who was born 1722, died 1775, and was buried at the Trumbauersville church. Henry, one of the sons, made powder for the Penna. Committee of Safety, 1776, at a mill on Swamp creek. Another son, John Jacob, was probably the "Jacob Hoover" mentioned here.

³ This was in 1859; the present owner we do not know.

the time fixed was the latter end of February, the place, his own tavern. The notice given was pretty general, and a large assemblage was expected.

The Jacob Hoover here spoken of was the uncle of Reuben L. Wyker, who lived near Rufe's store in Tinicum, and was active in assisting Fries. It is said he manufactured cartouch boxes for the use of the insurgents, and otherwise made himself useful to them. He escaped capture by having timely warning of the approach of the troops. George Wyker, also of Tinicum, and uncle of Reuben L., was in Philadelphia at market, at the time, and there learned that Jacob Hoover was to be arrested, and that a warrant had already been issued. Being anxious to prevent him falling into the hands of the federal authorities, he hastened home, as soon as he had sold out his marketing, to give warning of the danger. He told his father what he had heard in the city. The latter was Nicholas Wyker, who lived on the same farm where Alfred Sacket lived in more recent years, on the hillside near Rufe's store. He immediately set off for Hoover's, whom he found at home, apparently very much unconcerned, but entirely ignorant of the danger that threatened him. Even when told of the arrangements made to arrest him, he did not seem to give it much importance; but, while they were in conversation Hoover looked out the window and saw the troops coming up the road. This reminded him of the necessity of fleeing. He immediately ran out the back door, and, keeping the house between him and them, made his way to a neighboring thicket, into which he escaped. When the soldiers arrived at the house, they surrounded it and entered, but the bird had flown, and Hoover was nowhere to be found. After a thorough search, the officer gave up the pursuit and returned with his soldiers, much chagrined. Hoover kept out of harm's way until the affair had blown over, when he returned home. He afterward removed to Lewistown, in this State, where he died.

In the meantime the adjourned meeting to be holden at Rodrock's tavern, on February 16, at which the returns of the assessments were to be made, came off. All the assessors,

except Mr. Clark, were there and reported the assessments had been nearly completed in all the townships except Milford, where nothing had as yet been done. The assessor of this township had been so much intimidated and threatened he was afraid to go about in the discharge of his duties. Mr. Foulke also expressed some fears of going into the township, as threats had likewise been made against him, and he anticipated trouble. This state of things changed his mind in regard to permitting the people of the township to select their own assessor, and he now gave his consent to it, hoping it would conciliate them. He used his influence with the commissioner to induce him to agree to the same, and he finally yielded and gave his permission. He notified the assessors, at the same time, that in case the people did not accept the terms offered them, and choose some person to discharge the duty, they would have to go into the township, and assist Clark to make the assessments. Proposals were made to the various assessors as to which would assume the duty, but each one had some excuse to give why he could not go, showing great unwillingness to place themselves in the way of danger. The unsettled condition of Milford alarmed them, John Fries and his friends being the terror of these officers.

The time for the meeting advertised to take place at Mitchell's had now arrived, which was holden on a Saturday, and a great many persons were at it. Everhard Foulke and James Chapman were present on the part of the assessors. The meeting was called for the purpose of reading and explaining the law, as they were extremely ignorant of its provisions and operations; but they behaved in such a disorderly manner nothing could be done. A general fear appears to have seized upon those present. Mr. Foulke used his best endeavors to remove it, but without avail. In their present state of mind, as he well knew, any explanation of the law on his part would have but little, if any, effect, and he did not even attempt it. Among the well disposed citizens present was Jacob Klein, who, at the request of Mitchell, made an effort to calm the fears of the people, but he met with no success, for the clamor and noise were so incessant he could not be heard.

Israel Roberts proposed to read the law to them, but they would not listen to him, and drowned his voice in their shouts. Conrad Marks, who afterward became an active participant in the disturbance, was at the meeting, but it does not appear that John Fries was there, which is hardly reconcileable, with his known activity in opposing the law. The assessors seeing nothing could be done toward satisfying their minds on the subject of the tax, and removing their prejudice and opposition to the law's execution, declined to take further part in the meeting and returned home.

The officers, upon this occasion, met with a signal failure in their attempt to induce the people to acquiesce in the assessments, and the result of the meeting gave encouragement to the opposition. In the subsequent trial of John Fries before the United States Court, Mr. Chapman, who was a witness on the part of the Government, gives the following account of what took place at this meeting, so far as it fell under his own observations. He says:

"I got there between one and two o'clock. Just as I got to the house, before I went in, I saw ten or twelve people coming from towards Hoover's mill; about the half of them were armed, and the others with sticks. I went into the house and twenty or thirty were there. I sat talking with some of my acquaintance that were well disposed to the laws. Conrad Marks talked a great deal in German; how oppressive it was, and much in opposition to it, seeming to be much enraged. His son, and those who came with him, seemed to be very noisy and rude; they talked in German, which as I did not know sufficiently, I paid but little attention to them. They were making a great noise; huzzaing for liberty and Democracy, damning the Tories, and the like. I let them go on, as I saw no disposition in the people to do anything toward forwarding the business. Between four and five I got up to go out; as I passed through the crowd towards the bar, they pushed one another against me.

"No offer was made to explain the law to them while I staid; they did not seem disposed to hear it.

"They did not mention my name the whole time of my being there, but they abused Eyerly and Balliett and said they had cheated the public, and what villains they were. I understood it was respecting collecting the revenue, but I did not understand near all they said. I recollect Conrad Marks said that Congress had no right to make such a law, and that he never would submit to have his house taxed.

"They seemed to think that the collectors were all such fellows; the insinuation was that they cheated the public, and made them pay, but never paid into the Treasury. After getting through the crowd to the bar, I suppose I was fifteen minutes in conversation with Mitchell; he said perhaps they were wrong, but the people were very much exasperated. Nothing very material happened, and I asked Mr. Foulke if it were not time to be going. So I got into my sleigh and went off; soon after they set up a dreadful huzza and shout."

Israel Roberts and other witnesses, on the part of the prosecution at the trial of Fries, and who was present at the meeting at Mitchel's, testified as follows:

"At the last meeting at Mitchell's there appeared a disposition to wait till they should have assistance from some other place. It was said that a letter had arrived to George Mitchell, from Virginia, stating there were a number of men, I think ten thousand, on their way to join them; the letter was traced from one to another, through six or eight persons, till at last it came from one who was not there. Some of the company at that time were armed and in uniform. I do not recollect what was said when the letter was mentioned, but they appeared to be more opposed to the law than they were before.

"At the meeting at George Mitchel's, at which Mr. Foulke and Mr. Chapman were present, which was held for the purpose of explaining the law, there were a number, about twelve came up in uniform, and carrying a flag with "Liberty" on it. They came into the house and appeared to be very much opposed to the law, and in a very bad humour. I proposed to read the law to them; and they asked me how I came to

advertise the meeting ; I told them I did it with the consent of a few others ; one of them asked me what business I had to do it ; I told him we did it to explain the law. He looked me in the face and said, 'We don't want any of your damned laws, we have laws of our own,' and he shook the muzzle of his musket in my face, saying, 'This is our law and we will let you know it.' There were four or five who wished to hear it, but others forbid it, and said it should not be read, and it was not done."

On his way home from the meeting, Mr. Chapman stopped at the public house of Jacob Fries, who then kept the tavern more recently occupied by George L. Pheister, at the east end of Trumbauersville, where he waited for Mr. Foulke to come up, who arrived soon after. Clark was also there. Mr. Chapman had a conversation with him upon the subject of taking the rates in the township, when he declined to have anything more to do with it. He gave as a reason for this course that it would not be safe for him to undertake the assessments, and that he did not feel justified in endangering his life in order to assist to have the law carried into execution. He thus washed his hands of the whole business, and resigned his commission. It was now evident to Chapman and Foulke, that the other assessors would be obliged to make the assessments in Milford, if they were made at all, and they deemed it their duty to take immediate steps to have it done. They agreed to meet the assessors at Quakertown, on March 4, in order to commence the work, and, before they left for home, Mr. Chapman asked each one to be present at the time and place appointed. When the day arrived for the meeting, but three of the assessors attended, Rodrock, Childs and Foulke, in addition to the principal, Mr. Chapman. They waited until evening without transacting any business, expecting others would arrive but none came, when they adjourned to meet at the house of Mr. Chapman, at nine o'clock the next morning.

As soon as it became noised about that the assessors had resolved to come into the township to take the rates, those op-

posed to the law renewed their activity against it. The people were told by the leaders that the assessments must not be made, and force would be used to prevent it, if necessary. The information that the assessors, who were now looked upon as enemies to republican institutions were coming, increased the excitement, and the people began active measures to oppose them. Captain Kuyder, who was in command of a company of militia, called them into service to assist in driving the assessors out of the township. He notified his men to meet him at his mill, on March 6, where some fifteen or twenty assembled. Early in the morning, while he was abroad in the neighborhood, he met his acquaintance, William Thomas, whom he invited to go to the mill and see his men. He accepted the invitation and accompanied the Captain there. His men were getting together. When he arrived he found a number already assembled, a portion of them armed and others soon came up. After remaining a little while the Captain ordered his men to take up the march for the tavern of Jacob Fries, Trumbauersville.

By the time they reached the village a considerable number of stragglers had been attracted, who helped to swell the throng. They marched along the main road until they came to the tavern, when they drew up in front of it and halted. Here a number more joined them, making about thirty in all. The people assembled expressed a desire to see the assessors, whom they knew were somewhere in the township making assessments; and a couple of horsemen were sent off to hunt them up and notify them they were wanted. They were instructed, in case they should find them, to take them prisoners, and either conduct them to Quakertown or bring them to Fries' tavern. Soon after the messengers had left, it was proposed that Captain Kuyder's company and the rest of the people assembled, should march to Quakertown and they immediately started down the road for that place. They presented a somewhat martial, but very irregular, appearance; the greater part being either armed with guns or clubs and accompanied with drum and fife. As they passed through the country they attracted much attention, and the sounds of

their martial music were heard "far o'er hill and dale." They, who were not cognizant of the movement, and hardly knew what to make of the demonstration, went to the roadside to see what was going on. As they marched along the road they increased in number, and, by the time they reached their destination, there were more than a hundred in the company. This movement was the commencement of the overt acts of resistance, and had an important bearing on the subsequent conduct of those who became insurgents in name and deed.





The Fries Rebellion.

CHAPTER III.

Fries Captures the Assessors.

The three assessors, Chapman, Foulke and Childs, met, on the morning of March 5, at the house of Mr. Chapman as had been agreed upon, and thence proceeded into Milford township to make the assessments. They thought it advisable to call upon Clark, in the first instance, and see if they could not prevail upon him to go with them and divide the township, so as to complete their work in a short time. When they arrived at his house he was absent from home, and it was thought best for Mr. Chapman to go in search of him. Learning he had gone to assist one of his neighbors to move, he went to Jacob Fries' tavern to wait for him to return. In a little while he came. Upon being asked to assist in assessing the township he positively refused, saying he might as well pay his fine, even if it should take all the property he had. Finding that nothing could be done with him, the subject was dropped. While Mr. Chapman was at the tavern, John Fries came up. After passing the compliments of the day, Fries remarked to him he understood he had been insulted at one of the meetings in the township, which, he said, would not have been the case had he been present, and expressed his regret at the rudeness with which the assessor had been treated. The following interview then took place between the two, as sworn to on the trial of Fries :

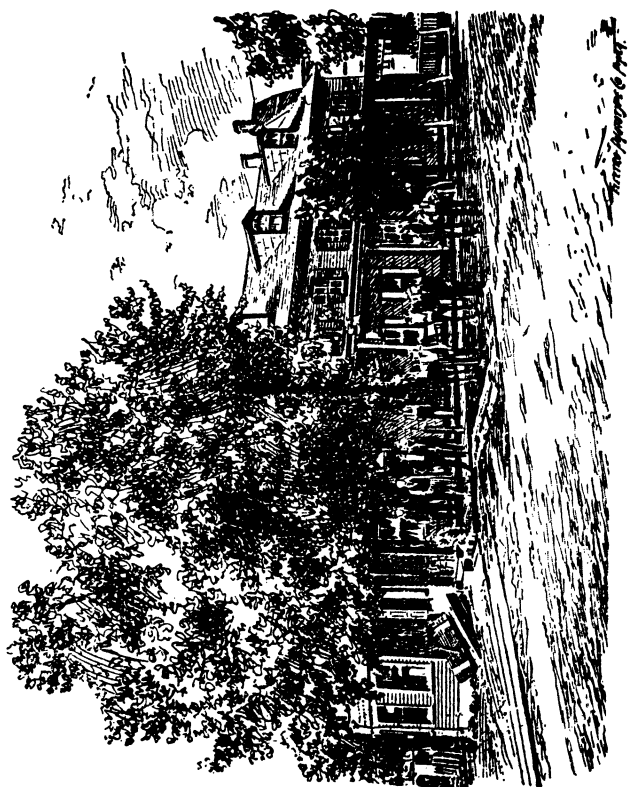
"I told him (Fries) I thought they were very wrong in opposing the law as they did ; he signified that he thought they were not, and that the rates should not be taken by the as-

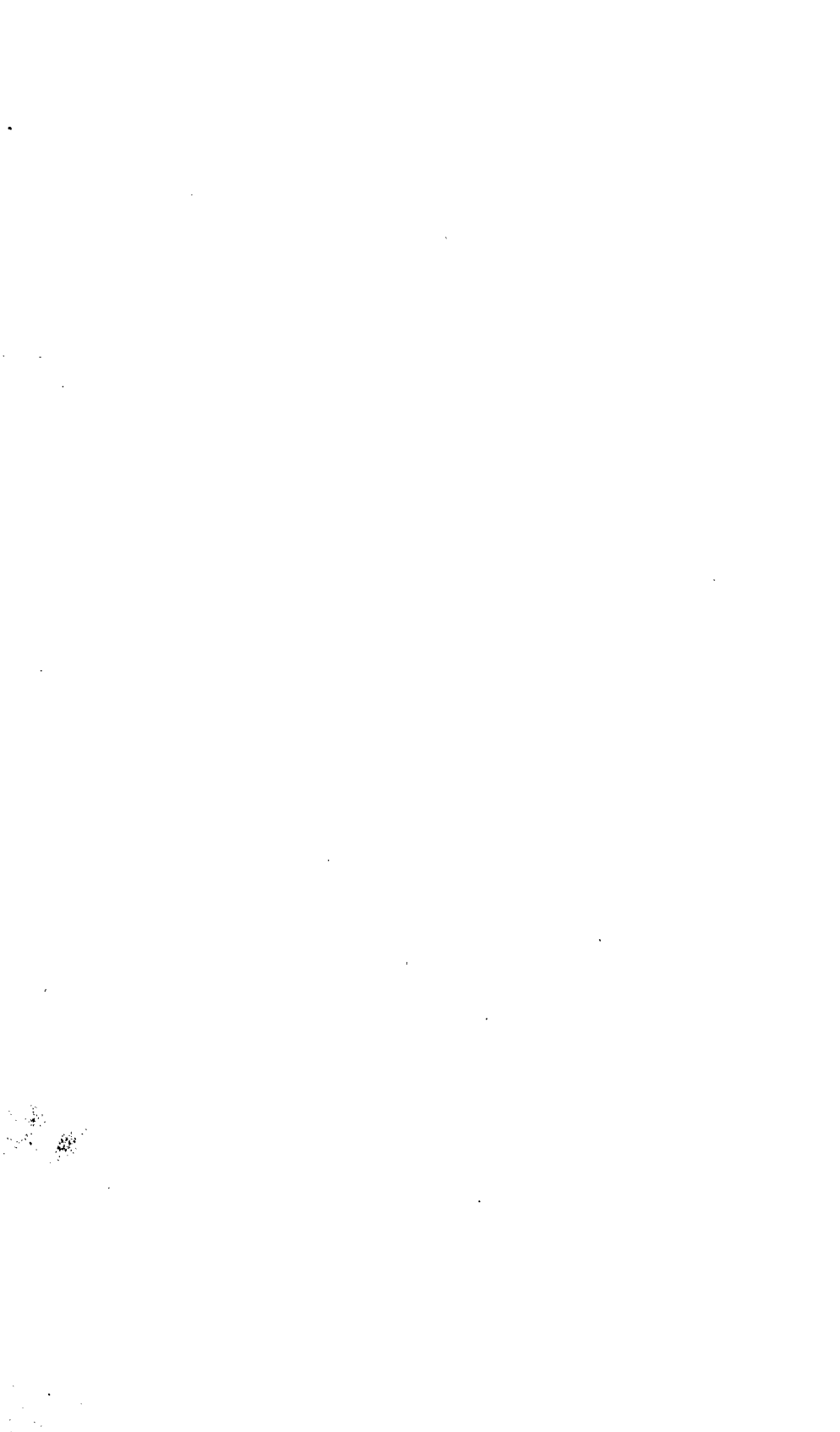
¹ Jacob Fries' tavern, torn down many years ago, was situated in the rocky part of Milford township, in a valley, about a mile below Milford Centre, and two hundred yards from a public road. The road passed by the house in early times, but was changed. The house was a long, story and a half, stone and log building. It was not a tavern for more than half a century before it was torn down. The property was once owned by John Keiper.

sessors. I told him the rates would certainly be taken, and that the assessors were then in the township taking them.* I repeated it to him, and he answered, 'My God! if I were only to send that man (pointing to one standing by,) to my house to let them know they were taking the rates, there would be five or seven hundred men under arms here to-morrow morning by sunrise.' He told me he would not submit to the law. I told him I thought the people had more sense than to rise in arms to oppose the law in that manner; if they did, government must certainly take notice of it, and send an armed force to enforce the law. His answer was, 'if they do, we will soon try who is the strongest.' I told him they certainly would find themselves mistaken respecting their force; he signified he thought not; he mentioned to me the troop of horse in Montgomery county, and the people at Upper and Lower Milford,² and something about infantry who were ready to join. He said he was very sorry for the occasion, for, if they were to rise, God knew where it would end; the consequences would be dreadful; I told him they would be obliged to comply; he then said huzza, it *shall* be as it is in France, or *will* be as it is in France, or something to that effect. He then left me and went off."

While Mr. Chapman was waiting for Clark at Jacob Fries' tavern, and holding the strange interview with John Fries, the other assessors were engaged in taking the rates around the township. The first house they came to was Daniel Weidner's, at the west end of Trumbauersville, and occupied by Geo. Zeigler, 1859. Childs went in first and told Mr. W. that he had come in order to take the assessment under the revenue law of the United States. He appeared to be in a bad humour at the proceeding, and declined to give any information of his property. The assessor reasoned with him, and pointed out the impropriety of his conduct and what would be the consequence of his opposing the law. He was told he might have ten days to consider the matter, at the end of which time he would be able to determine what he ought to do. He professed not to know whether the law was in force, and said many other things in extenuation of his conduct;

* Upper and Lower Milford townships in Lehigh county, originally Upper Milford, in Bucks, fell into Northampton when that county was cut off from Bucks, 1752, and into Lehigh when that county was organized, 1812. At what time Upper Milford was divided we do not know.





charged the assessor with receiving very high wages, &c. Mr. Childs explained that the law was in force and how a committee of Congress had reported against the expediency of repealing it. At last, Weidner, overcome by persuasion, or argument, consented to be assessed and gave up his property, saying to the assessor, "take it now, since it must be done." Childs then continued on his round, walking and leading his horse from house to house, until he reached Mitchel's tavern,¹ where he found the other two assessors, who had arrived a little while before. Weidner got there in advance and was again railing out against the law; and said that the houses of high value were to pay nothing, while smaller ones, and of small value, were to pay high. He was again reasoned with, and finally became apparently reconciled, and gave up an additional piece of property to be assessed. He seemed to take the matter much at heart, however, and exclaimed, "They will ruin me; what shall I do?" The assessors then continued on their way toward Jacob Fries' tavern, where they were to meet the principal assessors by appointment, assessing several houses as they went along. They had assessed some fifty or sixty houses in the whole, up to this point, and had done it without opposition. In every case but one the people were at home, and there a notice was left. They arrived at the tavern a little before dinner. As Mr. Childs was going into the door he was met by John Fries, who shook him by the hand, said he was glad to see him, and asked him to take a drink.

The assessors dined at Jacob Fries'. After dinner, and while they were sitting at the fire, John Fries came into the room. He addressed himself to Mr. Foulke and Mr. Chapman, and said they were men he greatly esteemed, and was sorry they had placed themselves in that position. He here proclaimed his opposition to the law; and said "I now warn you not to go to another house to take the rates; if you do you will be hurt." Without waiting for a reply he turned upon his heel and went out of the room. He seemed irritated and in anger. He said nothing more to them while they remained there. After a conference, the assessors concluded to

¹ I have not been able to locate Mitchel's tavern, further than to say it was in Milford township.

pay no attention to the threat of John Fries, but proceed with the assessments. While at the tavern, Mr. Childs took the rates of Jacob Fries' house to which no opposition was made. It was then agreed that Rodrock and Foulke should go together, and Childs by himself to assess the houses of some who were known to be quiet and orderly people. They then mounted their horses and rode away in discharge of their duty. They found a marked difference, between the English and German, to be assessed; with the former they had no difficulty, except at one place, where the family said there were some bad people living in the neighborhood who would do them injury if they submitted to the rates. Messrs. Rodrock and Foulke continued on until about sunset without meeting any hindrance, or seeing any sign of opposition to the execution of the law. They were now going to the house of a man named Singmaster, and, as they turned down a lane out of the public road, they heard some person halloo to them; when, stopping and looking round, they saw John Fries and five men coming toward them. Fries was in front, and upon coming up he said he had warned them not to proceed with the assessments, but as they would not obey him he had now come to take them prisoners. Rodrock asked him by what authority he had stopped them, to which he made no reply, but immediately grappled for the bridle of his horse. He wheeled the horse around at the moment, which caused Fries to miss the bridle and catch the rider by the coat tail, but the latter succeeded in tearing away and freeing himself from his grasp. Fries then rode off, but, before he had gone far, he turned about and approached the assessor again. He now cursed Rodrock, and, remarked to him, if he had a horse he would catch him. He offered no further insult, but returned to his companions. Mr. Foulke was less fortunate. The comrades of Fries surrounded him and secured him without resistance; but when in their power they offered him no injury, but treated him with kindness. When Fries returned to his men and found Mr. Foulke in their hands, he at once directed them to let him go, giving as a reason that as they were not able to catch Mr. Rodrock, they would not detain him. As the as-

essor was released Fries remarked to him, "I will have seven hundred men together to-morrow, and I will come to your house, and let you know we are opposed to the law." Being at liberty once more the assessors proceeded to the house of Philip Singmaster, who lived on the road leading from Trumbauersville to Philadelphia, half a mile from the former place, and in a house occupied by Zeno Frantz, 1859. They found him at home, and, upon informing him of their business, were permitted to assess his house without opposition. While here Mr. Childs rejoined them as had been agreed upon when they parted company at the tavern of Jacob Fries. They now compared opinions, and came to the unanimous conclusion they would not be justified in further attempt to take the rates in Milford township, on account of the violent opposition of the inhabitants, led on by John Fries; and the principal assessor was to give notice of this determination to the commissioners. They thereupon ceased to make assessments in the township and turned their faces homeward on the afternoon of March 6.

Meanwhile the insurgents continued their march toward Quakertown, where they arrived about noon, or shortly after. In a little while the party of Capt. Kuyder was joined by John Fries and companions and several others. They halted at the tavern of Enoch Roberts, the same kept by Peter Smith, 1859, when those on horseback dismounted, and, as many as could, went into the house. The scene around the tavern was one of noise and confusion, while those inside were no less boisterous. They were hallooing, and cursing and swearing; the most violent were denouncing John Adams, the house-tax, and the officers who were to execute the law; some were drumming and fifeing, apparently endeavoring to drown the hum of confused voices in the strains of martial music, and numerous other ways were resorted to, to give vent to their feelings. The bar of Mr. Roberts was pretty generously patronized, and that liquor flowed so freely the excitement and confusion were increased. Fries, expecting the assessors to come that way on their return home, he

had made up his mind to arrest them if nothing transpired to interfere with his arrangements.-

When the assessors ended their conference at Philip Singmaster's, after having assessed him, they started directly homeward, having to pass through Quakertown their most direct road. Messrs. Foulke and Rodrock rode together, while Mr. Childs preceded them a short distance. When they arrived at the village, they found it in possession of the crowd of people already mentioned, under the control of John Fries and Conrad Marks. Some were in uniform and others in their usual working clothes; some were armed with guns, and others carried clubs. The noise and confusion they made were heard some time before the assessors reached the town. The testimony, given on the trial, shows they were congregated at two public houses, one already mentioned as being kept by Enoch Roberts, whereas the other was called "Zeller's tavern." We have been at considerable trouble to locate this latter public house, but have been unable to do so. The house, in which Richard Green lived, 1859, on the road to the railroad station, is said to stand on the site of an old tavern which may have been the one the witnesses called "Zeller's." On the other hand it is said, by the old residents of Quakertown, that Enoch Roberts had a son-in-law named N. B. Sellers, who assisted him to keep the public house he then occupied. The name of Zeller may have been intended for Sellers, and is possibly a misprint in the report of the trial, both meaning one and the same place.

When the insurgents saw the assessors coming they set up a great shout, and, as soon as they had approached within hailing distance, ordered them to stop. This they did not heed, as they had determined not to place themselves in their power if it could be avoided. As they entered the village Messrs. Foulke and Rodrock separated, and did not ride in together, Mr. Childs having already stopped at the house of a neighbor just on the edge of the town. Rodrock now rode in advance, and, when he had passed about half through the crowd, without giving heed to their commands to stop, they started to run after him from both sides of the road, some car-

rying clubs and others muskets, and made motions as if they intended to strike him. John Fries was standing upon the porch of the tavern, and when he saw Rodrock coming up he called out to him to stop, but, paying no attention to it, some of the men ran after him. The assessor, seeing himself pursued, wheeled his horse and demanded of Fries what he wanted with him. This seemed to excite the men the more, and they replied to him with curses, and ordered him, in an authoritative tone, to deliver himself up. To this he replied he would not do it while they addressed him in such language as they had applied to him. Some one in the crowd then gave the order to fire at him, when two men standing near the tavern door pointed their guns but did not fire. He now rode off toward home, and when they saw him making his escape, they again commanded him to stop; some making demonstrations to get their horses and pursue him, but they did not. When he reached the house of Daniel Penrose, seeing Jacob Fries and John Jamieson there, he halted and related to them what had taken place. He appeared to be much alarmed; said that Foulke and Childs had been captured, and was afraid they would be killed. He requested Jamieson to return to the village, and prevent them being hurt, which he declined doing unless Rodrock would accompany him; but he was finally prevailed upon to go. He found the two assessors in the hands of the mob but not injured.

The other two assessors were less fortunate both falling into the hands of the enemy. As Mr. Foulke, who was some little ways in the rear of Mr. Rodock, approached Roberts' tavern, the crowd ran out to surround him. Some took hold of the horse's bridle, while others, among them Captain Kuyder, seized his person. John Fries came up at this moment and commanded him to dismount, saying that he desired to speak to him, while the surrounding crowd demanded he should be pulled off his horse. There was great danger of violent hands being laid on him, and he began to be alarmed at his situation. At this critical moment, the two Hoovers, John and Jacob, came to his assistance, and interfered with the excited multitude in his behalf. They ordered the mob to desist from their

insults, and let Mr. Foulke alone, who would get off his horse without any compulsion. They gave the insurgents to understand the assessors would not be injured while they could protect them. Their resolute conduct somewhat silenced the crowd. Mr. Foulke deemed it the best policy to comply with their demands, inasmuch as he was not in a condition to help himself, and therefore rode up to the tavern shed, where he dismounted, tied his horse, and went into the house. The crowd followed him and soon the bar-room was filled. Now Fries reminded him that he had warned him the day before not to assess the houses in Milford township, and yet they had done so contrary to his orders. He then demanded Foulke's papers, which were delivered to Fries, who, after reading, carefully returned, them. The assessor was now suffered to depart, Fries escorting him through the people to his horse, and holding the bridle while he mounted, when he rode off. Fries admitted to Foulke that he had violated the law, probably enough to endanger his life, and told him that he might "return him to the Court if he wanted to do so."

It will be remembered that Mr. Childs did not accompany Rodrock and Foulke into Quakertown, but stopped at the edge of it—at the house of Esquire Griffith, who lived where Joseph R. Lancaster resided, 1859, where he dismounted and went in. As he was getting off his horse, Mrs. Griffith came out of the house and told him the people had come to make him and the others prisoners, and there was a large crowd in the village waiting to catch them. A few moments after he entered the house, a little girl came into the room and said the insurgents were taking Mr. Foulke, and, upon going to the window, saw them all around him. When he saw the danger which menaced his companions, he was going out to assist them, but the family persuaded him to remain where he was, and not place himself in unnecessary danger. In a little while John Fries came to the house and saluted Childs in a friendly manner, but told him he must accompany him to where his men were; and, as he had not the power to resist, concluded he might as well yield with as good grace as possible, and thereupon consented to go. As they walked along, Fries said

to Childs he had told him yesterday not to go to another house, and now they had come to make him prisoner if they found he intended to go on with the assessments. Childs replied that he and the others were obliged to fulfil their office, unless interrupted by force. When they entered the tavern, Fries addressed himself to his men and Childs, saying: "Here are my men—here is one of them." Going into the bar-room he seated himself upon a table and soon there were several around him. One man damned him and said he should go to the liberty pole and dance around it. During this time they were crowding upon him and pushing, and he received several thumps with the knees and fists. At first he was taken for Rodrock, but when it was discovered he was not, they cursed him anew for being somebody else. He then made himself known as Cephus Childs, when some one remarked he was no better than the others. They asked him a multitude of questions about the assessments; how the people liked it where he had been, whether he had taken the oath of allegiance to the United States, &c., &c. That the reader may judge of the temper the people were in, we make the following extract from the testimony of Mr. Childs, given on the trial:

"They damned the house tax and the stamp act, and called me a 'stamplere,' repeatedly; they damned the Alien and Sedition laws, and finally all the laws; the government and all the laws the present government had made. They damned the Constitution, also. They did not mention what constitution, whether of this State or of the United States. They damned the Congress, and damned the President, and all the friends to government, because they were all tories, as none were friends to the present government but the tories. They said they would not have the government, nor the President, and they would not live under such a damned government; 'we will have Washington;' others said no, 'No, we will have Jefferson, he is a better man than Adams; huzzah for Jefferson.'"

Those assembled continued in this strain, and constantly expressed themselves as opposed to the law, and their determination to resist its execution. They boasted that every

man in Northampton county would assist them except a few tories, and that between Quakertown and the Delaware, they could raise ten thousand men; and further that General Washington had sent them word that he had twenty thousand men to assist them. Some spoke in German and others in English. After John Freis took Mr. Childs into the house, he left him among the crowd and went out again, being gone some time. When he returned he apologized to him for the manner in which his men had used him. He then took him into an inner room where there were but few people, and demanded his assessment papers. He gave him some papers he had about him, but which did not refer to the collection of taxes, when Fries gave a shout and told his men he had got what they wanted. He then went out of the room, most of his men following him. The crowd were gone but a short time when they returned without Fries, shouting, and rushed up to Childs and took hold of him. Some were armed with clubs, guns, pistols, &c., and others had swords. Daniel Weidner, whose house he had assessed in the morning, was with them, who insisted upon Childs surrendering to him the assessment he had made of his house, but he did not give it up. They again took hold of him and shook him severely; and one man came forward and said he should be shot. Conrad Marks was present armed with a sword, who made many threats, but did not attempt to put any of them into execution. Childs attempted to reason with them, but it had little if any effect toward pacifying them. During this proceeding, Fries returned into the room and gave back the papers to Childs, telling him at the same time he must now go home, and never come back again into the township to assess, or he would be shot. To this he replied that he had left the township with a view of not returning to it again unless compelled to do so by authority, and that, from their present treatment, as he would never be likely to come back without such authority, they might have leave to shoot him. They then told him they wished him and Mr. Foulke to inform the government what had been done, as soon as they pleased. After a little more parleying they gave him his liberty, when he rode off, glad enough to make his escape from such unpleasant company.

There is some discrepance, as regards what took place at Quakertown the day the assessors were captured, between the records of the transaction and the relation of those who have a recollection of the event. We had interviews with some of the oldest inhabitants of that section upon the subject, and find them at variance with the testimony drawn from other sources. They state that the assessors were chased to Quakertown by Fries and his party, and that he snapped his gun three times at Mr. Foulke; that the latter sprang from his horse at the porch of Enoch Roberts' tavern and ran in, when they hid him in the cellar, where he remained concealed until ten o'clock, when he was released and ran home. Another version has it that he was hid under the counter in the bar-room, and that Fries hunted all through the house, but was unable to find him; that they got Fries, Haney and Getman drunk, when Foulke stole out and went home. Still another story is that he was kept confined in a stable, and that Mr. Childs was sent to inform his wife, but was afraid to go into the house, and walked in the yard until ten o'clock at night, when Foulke came home. These statements differ so widely, from the evidence given on the trial, we have thought it best to follow the testimony, believing that to be the nearest correct, because it was related under oath soon after the events happened. One circumstance is told by those who remember the difficulty, which seems so reasonable it is probably true; that a man named Everhart pointed his gun at Foulke, while they had him imprisoned at the tavern, but was so drunk he fell over while doing so. They afterward examined the gun, and found that the ball had been put in the bottom, and the powder on top.

The circumstances which took place at Quakertown decided the assessors to make no further attempt to take assessments in Milford, as they were convinced it would lead to difficulty, and, possibly, bloodshed. In other parts of the county the law was quietly acquiesced in, and the officers discharged their duty peaceably, but it was, nevertheless, very unpopular and odious. For the time being, Fries and his friends had prevented the execution of the law in the disaffected district, but

as far as we have been able to learn, no public outrages were committed, and their only desire seemed to be to prevent the officers, by intimidation, from making the assessments.

The foregoing embraces the proceedings of the insurrectionists, or insurgents, while opposing the execution of the house tax law in Milford. It will be noticed their whole conduct was of that earnest character which marks the actions of men who are sincere in what they are doing. While there was, naturally, considerable noise and confusion attendant upon their conduct, and high excitement prevailing, there was no unnecessary disturbance, and nothing that can properly be called violence. Rude they were, but not to an extent to create a breach of the peace. We have every reason to believe they considered the law of the most oppressive character, and their minds had probably been inflamed against it by the misrepresentation of others. This opinion had been formed before they had an opportunity to learn its provisions and operations, and they were afterward either too much prejudiced, or their pride would not permit them, to be rightly informed. The law of itself was a mild one, and no one who examines it at this day can see anything in it to cause such opposition to it. The rates were light, and the burden of the tax fell upon the shoulders of those who were the best able to bear it. There was likewise a public necessity for that or a similar Act of Congress, and it was necessary that the revenue should be increased, as there was every probability of the government being driven into a war with one of the most powerful nations of Europe. The situation of the politics of the country had something to do with the opposition that was raised against the law. But recently, before their passage, the two statutes known as the Alien and Sedition Laws had passed Congress, which were received with a burst of indignation that had never been equaled in the country. They brought the administration of Mr. Adams into great unpopularity, if not detestation. (The odium that rested upon these laws was reflected upon the house tax, and thus it was condemned in advance because it was found in bad company.) Many honest people believed that an Act of Congress taxing the country, emanating from

the same government which had given them the Alien and Sedition Laws, must naturally be a wicked one, and, they were so well convinced of this, they were not open to persuasion to the contrary. Another circumstance, in connection with the manner in which the law was executed, had something to do with its great unpopularity. (The officers exceeded their duties, and went beyond their instructions. The assessors were only required, by law, to assess the *houses, lands and slaves*, and were not directed to count the window lights of the houses, which was a duty superadded by the officers who had charge of affairs.) The fact of the window lights being counted created suspicion in the minds of the people that it was done for the purpose of making them the subject of future taxation. This, more than anything else, led to the meetings held by the people, and, notwithstanding the unpopularity of the measure, there would probably never have been any "insurrection" or outbreak, had the assessors confined themselves to the duties which the law required of them. The abuse of the law had probably more to do with causing the disturbance than the law itself.)





The Fries Rebellion.



CHAPTER IV.

Opposition to the House Tax Law in Northampton.

Having recounted, in the preceeding chapter, the opposition to the House Tax Law in Bucks county, and the disturbance growing out of it, we shall now proceed to show what took place in Northampton.

It will be remembered that Jacob Eyerley was appointed commissioner for a district composed of the counties of Northampton,¹ Luzerne² and Wayne.³ As soon as the law was passed, the people of Northampton manifested so much opposition to it, Commissioner Eyerley believed there would be difficulty in carrying it out. This was before he had entered upon the discharge of his duties. While at Reading, in October, he was informed by the commissioner from Bucks, that he had seen persons who had traveled through that county, and in every tavern he stopped at, the law was the subject of general conversation and denunciation, and great pains were taken to find the friends of government, in order to persuade them not to accept the office of assessor. In consequence of this feeling there was great difficulty in finding suitable persons for these appointments. He selected one in each township, taking the most suitable for the duties, from all the in-

¹ Northampton county was cut off from Bucks, 1752.

² Luzerne county was cut off from Northumberland, by Act of September 25, 1786, and so named in honor of the Chevelier De la Luzerne, then French Minister to the United States. Its original territory embraced 5000 square miles, but its present area is but 1427. A portion of the celebrated Wyoming Valley lies within it.

³ Wayne county was organized by the Act of March 21, 1798, out of a portion of Northampton, and named after General Anthony Wayne. The original area was 1300 square miles.

formation he could get. Commissions were immediately sent them, with notice to meet the commissioner to receive instructions. At that time the commissioner did not believe the state of things was as bad in Northampton as he afterward found it to be. The disaffection in Bucks had spread over the line into some of the neighboring townships of the adjoining county, and the people had become as hostile to the tax as Fries and his neighbors.

Commissioner Eyerley divided Northampton into three districts and first met the assessors November 3, at Nazareth⁴. Two were absent, and some of those present asked to be excused from serving, on account of the hostility of the people and the assessors fear of injury. As the commissioner had no authority to relieve them they were not excused. Finding them misinformed of the nature and operation of the law the commissioner took great pains to disabuse their minds, and, with such success, they consented to serve, and were given instructions. The following day he met the assessors of the second district at Allentown,⁵ all being present but one. The same difficulty met him here he had to contend with at Nazareth, disinclination to accept for the same reason, opposition of the people to the law, and fear of being assaulted, should they attempt to make the assessments. With a good deal of difficulty those present were induced to accept the appointments. As it was taken for granted the absent assessor, a Mr. Horne, did not intend to accept, a blank commission was left with Mr. Balliott, a prominent resident of the county, with authority to appoint some suitable man in place of Mr. Horne. The assessors of the first district were met November 6, in Chestnut Hill township, with two absentees.

⁴ Nazareth, a village of a few hundred inhabitants, in Northampton county, ten miles from Bethlehem, was founded by the Moravians, 1775. The first house erected was a spacious stone mansion for the residence of Count Zingendorf. The building was converted into a school, 1785, and, from that time, known as "Nazareth Hall," a celebrated boarding school for boys.

⁵ Allentown was laid out by James Allen, 1762, after whom it was named, and called Northampton until 1838, when the present name was adopted. It is the county seat of Lehigh, and situated on the right bank of the Lehigh river. It is one of the most beautiful inland cities in the State.

One of these was a Mr. Kearne, of Easton,* but as it was not convenient for him to accept, he named a Mr. Snyder, who was only commissioned. He met with the others the same day; accepted the appointment and served. He stated there was much opposition to the law in his section of the county, and he did not understand it very well himself, but would do the best he could. The commissioner took considerable pains to explain the provisions of the law, which entirely satisfied him. He now became quite warm in its favor, and said he would ride fifty miles if it were necessary to accept the appointment, since he had been wrongly informed, about the law in the first place. The assessor from Hamilton township did not seem willing to accept his appointment, and it required a good deal of explanation and persuasion to overcome his disinclination. He at last consented, however, accepted his commission, and received his instructions.

In Northampton county the principal part of the opposition to the law was in the townships of Heidelberg, Weisenberg, Lynn, Low Hill, Penn, Moore, Upper Milford and Hamilton. In four districts it was of such violent character the law was not executed until after the troops were marched into them, and, in some of them, the people were almost unanimous against it. In Moore township, the opposition was only among a portion of the inhabitants, and, when the assessor was opposed when making the assessment, he called a town meeting and took the sense of the people. The assessor of Penn township did not meet the commissioners, but refused to accept the appointment in view of the difficulties in his way. Some time elapsed before any one could be found willing to accept the office, but, finally, one bold enough to assume the responsibility, presented himself and he was commissioned and qualified. When the people of the township

* Easton, the seat of justice of Northampton county, situated at the confluence of the Delaware and Lehigh, at what was known as "Forks of Delaware," was laid out by William Parsons, 1752. A ferry was established here as early as 1739, by David Martin, of Trenton, N. J., at which time a few log houses were standing on the present site of the town. A jail was completed, 1755, and the first court house erected, 1766. Easton has been the county seat since the organization of the county, 1752. It is the seat of Lafayette College, chartered, 1826.

heard that another person had been appointed in place of the one first named, and had undertaken to discharge the duties of the office, they became very violent and threatened him with personal injury. The leaders of the opposition collected a number of the disaffected into a mob, who waited upon the assessor, and gave him to understand harm would be done him if he attempted to take the rates. This demonstration intimidated him to such degree he resigned, and declined to have anything more to do with it. The hostility to the law continued so great in this township, the assessments were not made until sometime late in the spring of 1799, and after the presence of a military force had completely quelled everything like opposition.

The spirit of insubordination first manifested itself a little while before the general election, when meetings were held in different parts of the county to take action upon the subject. At one of these meetings the officers of the militia were invited to be present, and their co-operation, as the leaders of the military of the country, was earnestly desired. The leading object was to nominate candidates opposed to the law. At this meeting several resolutions were passed, one recommending the circulation of petitions asking a repeal of the Alien and Sedition Laws and the land tax. The proceedings were published in the newspapers and circulated among the people. A petition was given to each of the captains of militia to get signers. On the day of election the people turned out very generally, and, in most of the districts, the opposition to the government was so general, its friends dare not say a word in its favor for fear of being abused. The anti-administration candidates were elected by considerable majorities, and the people, generally, rejoiced at their success.

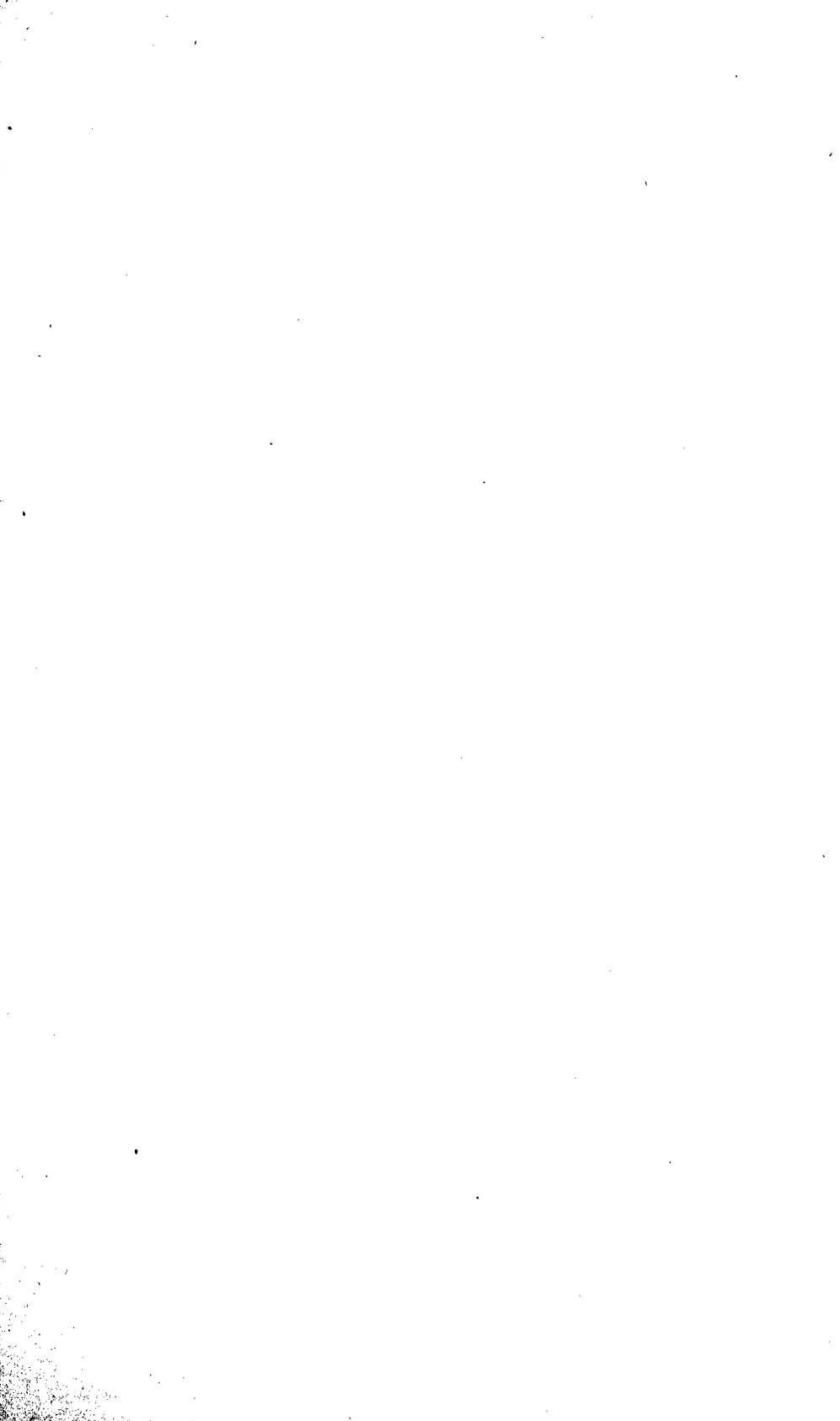
In Hamilton township, the people were so much enraged at Nicholas Michael, the assessor, for accepting the appointment, they went in large numbers to his house at night to do him bodily injury, but, being informed of their intention, he sought safety in flight. The next day he went to the commissioner and made complaint of the treatment he had received, tendered his resignation, and begged its acceptance. This was

declined; he was told to return to his duty, and he would be protected in the discharge of it. He accompanied the commissioner to Easton, to see Mr. Sitgreaves, the United States Attorney for the district, before whom he intended to make affidavit in order to have some of the evil-disposed placed under arrest. Mr. Sitgreaves not being at home, they went to Judge Traill,[†] an associate judge of the county; but, when they arrived there, Michael became alarmed and begged to be allowed until the next morning to consider the matter; saying, that if he informed against the people, he and his family would be ruined. In the morning he wished to be put in jail to be kept from danger, so great were his fears, but his request was not complied with.

In the present state of excitement the commissioner deemed it advisable to call a public meeting, at which the people could come together and have the law explained to them, as he was of opinion, the greater part of the opposition arose from a misconception of its provisions. With this object in view, he gave Mr. Michael a letter to take to the constable of the township, requesting him to fix the time and place for the meeting, and to give proper and timely notice thereof. Mr. Eyerley promised to be present to explain the law to such as did not understand it. The constable, accordingly, announced the meeting to be held at the public house of a Mr. Heller, and the time fixed was a few days before New Year's, but we have not been able to ascertain the precise day. The commissioner was present according to promise, being accom-

[†] Robert Traill was born on one of the Orkney Islands, April 29, 1744, and was the son of a clergyman. He came to America, 1763, reaching Philadelphia the 25th of December. He shortly went to Easton where he was occupied in a store, taught school a year; then studied law, and was admitted to the bar, 1777. He took an active part in the Revolution, and was Secretary of the County Committee of Safety from 1776 to 1778; was appointed a justice of the peace, 1777, and military storekeeper at Easton, March 11, 1778. He was sheriff of the county from 1781 to 1784; member of the Assembly for the sessions of 1785-86; member of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, 1786-88; and was commissioned one of the Associate Judges of Northampton, holding the office from May 14, 1796, to January 22, 1798, when he resigned. Judge Traill died at Easton, July 31, 1816. He filled a large space in public estimation, exerted a wide influence and was distinguished for his probity of character. His descendants, in the female line, live at Easton, one of them being Dr. Traill Green.





panied into the township by William Henry,* one of the Associate Judges of Northampton. When they arrived at the place of meeting they found some seventy persons assembled, among them three or four in uniform, whose arms were stacked behind the tavern door. After the meeting was organized, Mr. Eyerley arose and stated that he had come there as their friend, to explain the house tax law, that they might no longer be in ignorance of its provisions. He and Judge Henry then proceeded to explain the statutes as they understood them, but with little effect, as the people were not disposed to listen to any explanation that would be likely to give them a more favorable opinion of the odious law. They hated it, and did not wish to think well of it. In order to reconcile the people, to the assessment of the rates, he proposed they should elect an assessor of their own; this they refused to do, saying, if they did, it would amount to submission to the law, which they did not mean to make. The assessor already appointed was anxious to resign, but this he was not allowed to do, as no one could be found who would accept the appointment in his place.

In Upper Milford,* the people opposed to the law held a township meeting and appointed a committee of three to wait upon the assessor when he should begin the assessment, and request him to desist; and about the last of December, when he began the work, he was met by this committee and informed he could not proceed. No violence was offered, but he was given to understand he would not be permitted to carry out the law. He immediately wrote the commissioner

* William Henry, son of William and Ann Henry, was born at Lancaster, Pa., March 12, 1757. In 1778 he engaged in the manufacture of fire-arms in Northampton county, and in 1808 erected a forge in which the first iron manufactured in the county was drawn March 9, 1809. In 1813 he built the Boulton Gun Works on the Bushkill, which are still continued by his descendants of the name. Mr. Henry was commissioned January 14, 1788, a justice of the peace and Judge of the Courts of Common Pleas and Quarter Sessions of the county. He resigned 1814. In 1792 he was elected one of the Presidential electors of the State and cast his vote for Washington for President. He removed to Philadelphia, 1818, where he died April 21, 1821.

* Upper Milford, a township of Lehigh county, but originally in Bucks until Northampton was cut off, was organized, 1738. There were two Milfords, Upper and Lower, the former falling in Northampton on the division of Bucks, 1752. Germans settled here in the first quarter of the last century.

informing him of the situation of affairs, and asked advice as to the course to be pursued. The latter again thought it advisable to have a public meeting called, at which he would make another effort to explain the law to the people, and endeavor to satisfy them with its provisions. He directed the assessor to give notice to John Schymer, Moretz and other leading men of the township, that he would meet them at such time and place as they might appoint. The place fixed upon was the house of Mr. Schymer, date not known. When the time arrived the commissioner set out for the place of meeting, accompanied by Judge Henry, and, when he arrived within four miles of it, he was met by a friend who advised him not to attend, saying the people were so violent his life would be endangered, but he disregarded the warning and kept on. He found some 75 men assembled at the house of Schymer, several of them having French cockades in their hats, showing very plainly which side they took in politics.

One of the petitions, which a previous meeting had recommended should be circulated for signatures, was handed the commissioner who read it to the people. Some of them, upon hearing it, said it was not such a petition as they had been led to believe it was, as it mentioned nothing about the stamp act. As there was a report in circulation that the act was not in force, Mr. Eyerley read it in German, and explained to them it was their duty to submit to it. One, George Shaeffer, denying that it was a law, the question was submitted to the decision of Mr. Schymer, who, being a justice of the peace, had considerable influence over the minds of the people. Shaeffer was inclined to be noisy and created a disturbance, and he and others used abusive language to the assessor, Mr. Heckewelder,¹⁰ accusing him, among other things, of having been a tory during the Revolution. Mr. Eyerley proposed that inasmuch as they were opposed to the present assessor, he would give them the privilege of electing one of their own number, to whom he would give the appointment. This they declined,

¹⁰ Heckewelder, who lived at Emaus, now in Lehigh county, was appointed one of the assessors for Upper Milford or Salisbury, probably the latter. He was doubtless a son, or grandson, of Heckewelder, the Moravian divine.

saying: "We will do no such thing; if we do, we at once acknowledge that we submit to the law, and that is what we will not do." Three of the Shaeffers made demonstrations to beat Heckewelder, but were deterred by the interference of others, and he was allowed to go away without injury. The commissioner, even with the countenance of Mr. Schymer and several other well disposed persons present, found it impossible to reconcile the multitude to the law, and he returned home a second time without having effected anything. The opposition to the law in this township, likewise, was not overcome until the presence of troops intimidated them into submission, when the rates were taken without further trouble.

Resistance to the enforcement of the law had now reached that stage it became necessary for the authorities to take some notice of it. About January 15, 1799, Judge Henry, at the request of Commissioner Eyerley, and upon complaint of the assessors that they found it impossible to proceed in the execution of their duty, issued a number of subpœnas to bring persons, cognizant of the opposition to the execution of the laws, before him that he might make a careful examination of the cause of complaint and ascertain its truth. The witnesses who appeared were generally very reluctant to give information, being afraid the insurgents would do them some injury. The Judge made appointment to meet a number of persons at Trexlertown,¹¹ to inquire further into the matter, and a considerable crowd assembled. Among those present was part of a company of light horse under Captain Jarrett.¹² The men were mostly in uniform, and many of them noisy and impudent. The Judge was attended by the commissioner and Mr. Balliott. They, who were present, paid little respect to the officers but ridiculed, and made fun of them. From the indications at this meeting, it was evident the disturbance could not be quelled by the local officers, and it was thought best to

¹¹ Trexlertown, in Lehigh county, but, at that time, in Northampton, is a small post village, eight miles from Allentown, on the Catasauqua and Fogelsville railway. It is in a rich agricultural region.

¹² Although Captain Jarrett was evidently a man of some prominence in the community, we have not been able to obtain any information concerning him beyond that found in the text. The company he commanded was a local volunteer organization. Henry Jarrett, probably a relative, commanded a troop of light horse at Marcus Hook, 1814.

appeal to the Federal authority. The steps now about to be taken changed the aspect of affairs. Hitherto, it was considered but a local disaffection to a law of questionable expediency, and improperly understood, and which, in due time, would subside and be heard of no more. Down to this point it had hardly attracted public attention outside of the rural districts where the opposition was made, and neither State nor Federal Government had given it consideration. It now assumed National importance, and what shortly before, was unworthy the attention of politicians or statesmen, became a matter of great moment. The action of Judge Henry was the incipient step that changed the affair to an insurrection, and converted the opponents of the house-tax law into insurgents and traitors to their country.

Mr. Sitgreaves, United States District Attorney, was sent a number of the depositions he had caused to be taken to Judge Peters,¹⁰ of the United States District Court, Philadelphia. This was some time in February, and the first official information the Judge received on the subject, although he had before heard of it as a matter of news. He examined a few witnesses in addition to the affidavits, and, from the facts elicited, thought it his duty to issue warrants for the parties. Being much engaged he directed the District Attorney to draw up the form of warrants for his approval and signature. It had been decided, that, in order to ease the minds of the people, the warrants should be drawn in the nature of an order for the defendant to appear before some justice of the peace, or judge of the county, and give bail for appearance at the Circuit Court of the United States, but circumstances prevented it. After this had been decided upon, it came to the knowledge of the authorities that several of the magistrates themselves were disaffected, and others were prevented doing their duty through fear of injury. The Judge also had scruples as to the legality of the measure, whether persons, arrested on his warrants, could be taken before an inferior magistrate. While his

¹⁰ Richard Peters was born in Philadelphia, 1744; admitted to the bar, 1763; appointed a Justice of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, 1792, and died on the Bench, 1828, after continued service of 36 years.

mind was in doubt, he received additional information of the state of the people in the disaffected districts, and this induced him, both to make a change in the form of the warrants and the procedure under it. The warrants were now to be made returnable to Judge Peters' Court.





The Fries Rebellion.



CHAPTER V.

The Marshal Makes Arrests in Northampton.

When the form of the warrants was agreed upon, they were made out and put into the hands of Colonel Nichols,¹ United States Marshal, to be served. This was about January 25, and the Marshal was directed to proceed to Northampton county immediately and make the arrests. He left Philadelphia on the 26th, serving a few subpoenas on the road, in order to collect evidence, reaching Nazareth on March 1st. Here the Marshal met Commissioner Eyerley, and told him of the object of his visit, requesting him to go with him to serve the warrants executed. Those placed in his hands being only for the arrest of persons in Northampton county. The next morning, accompanied by Eyerley, and Eyerman, the Marshal set out to execute the warrants. They went first into Lehigh township, where twelve were arrested, all against whom they had process, but five others came in afterward and gave themselves up. Their offence being resistance to the execution of the house-tax law. They then returned to Bethlehem, where they were met by Colonel Balliott.

The Marshal's party next went to Macungie township, where they had no difficulty until they came to the house of George Snyder, near Emaus,² on whom the Marshal wished to serve a subpoena. Snyder and his wife used abusive

¹ Samuel Nichols was appointed U. S. Marshal of Pennsylvania, April 10, 1795; qualified May 18th, and confirmed June 26th. He served one term of four years; was reappointed during a recess of the Senate, June 26th, 1799, and succeeded, Dec. 6th, 1799, by John Hall. The State had not yet been divided into two districts. His county is not given.

² Emaus is a small town, lying at the foot of South Mountain, five miles south-east of Allentown, on the East Penn. railroad. The Moravians organized a church here, 1747, the house in which they worshipped being built as early as 1742.

language toward them, the woman taking the lead. The husband came out of his house with a club, and positively refused to receive the subpœna. He called the Marshal and the men with him rascals and highway robbers, and, upon being told he was only wanted to go to Philadelphia as a witness, he refused with an oath. The Marshal finding he could do nothing with him requested Daniel Swartz's son to read and explain the subpœna to him, and leaving it with him to be served if it were possible. Thence they proceeded to Millarstown,* a few miles' distant. On the road they stopped at the house of the Rev. Mr. VanBuskirk,† where they left their horses and walked into the town. The Marshal had a warrant for George Shaeffer, active in opposing the law, and to whose house they next proceeded to arrest him, but he was not at home. Not meeting with success in this case they went to the tavern, where a considerable number of people had assembled.

They now made an attempt to arrest a man named Shankwyler, who also lived in Millarstown. The Marshal and Commissioner walked over to his house, leaving Mr. Eyerman at

* Millarstown, now called Macungie, signifying "the feeding place of bears," and laid out by Peter Millar about 1776, is situated at the foot of South Mountain on the East Penn. railroad, nine miles from Allentown. It was incorporated in 1857.

† Jacob VanBuskirk, a native of Holland, settled with his family on a tract he purchased in Lower Macungie township, Lehigh county, November 19, 1784. The borough of Macungie now occupies the same land. I do not know the maiden name of his wife, but she was a sister of the great-grandmother of the late General Hartranft. He preached for the Lehigh Church at Germantown, and at the Trappe, visiting his congregations on horseback. He built, and, for several years operated, the tannery at Macungie, owned by his great-grandson, James Singmaster. He had three sons and four daughters; George became a physician, and settled at Pottstown; Jacob removed to New York State, where he died; John, the third son, settled in Virginia, afterward came to Philadelphia and kept an hotel. He married a Miss Eckhart, of Berks county. Of the daughters, Lydia married Adam Singmaster, of Millarstown, and, after his death, Daniel Good, of Upper Milford; another married John Shimer, of Shimersville, Northampton county, E. S. Shimer, Mayor of Allentown, being a grand-son. Mr. VanBuskirk was an ardent supporter of John Adams' Administration, and, during the excitement of the "Fries Rebellion," 1798, an attempt was made on his life. While sitting at home, surrounded by his family, a bullet was sent crashing through the window, but he luckily escaped injury. He was buried at North Wales, and his wife at the Lehigh Church. Adam Singmaster, who married the daughter Lydia, was a descendant, probably a son, of John Adam Zangmeister, who came from Wurtumburg in the good ship, "Patience," Hugh Steelmaster, September 19, 1749, and settled in Bucks county. Adam, when a young man, went to Millarstown, where he obtained employment in Rev. Jacob VanBuskirk's family, and afterward married the daughter.

the tavern. They had not intimated they desired to arrest him, but when they left the tavern the people suspected their intention and followed them in a crowd to the number of about fifty. They went in advance of the officers, and, reaching the house before them, filled the large room. When the Marshal arrived a friend pointed out Shankwyler to Col. Nichols, but observing what was going on, he withdrew into the crowd, with the intention of hiding himself from view; but the Marshal followed him, and, putting his hand upon his shoulder, informed him he was a prisoner, in the name of the United States, announcing himself as the United States Marshal for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. Shankwyler, having no idea of being captured without some resistance, broke loose from the Marshal and fled toward the barn. He proclaimed he would not injure the Marshal, but made threats against Eyerley and Balliott, toward whom he manifested great hostility. The people became much excited at this proceeding, and many cried out in German, "Strike! Strike!" Some said if he were taken out of his house they would fight as long as they had a drop of blood in their bodies. They seemed inclined to lay violent hands upon Balliott, and one of the crowd presumed to pull the cockade from his hat. The Marshal warned them of the consequences of their attempting to strike, and reasoned with them upon their riotous conduct. Finding that himself and companions were in danger, the Marshal unbuttoned his coat, that the people might see a pair of pistols he had with him, and also in order that he might be able to grasp them quickly, should he find it necessary to use them. The determined manner of the Marshal had its effect, and the crowd became quieter. Shankwyler refused to accompany the Marshal to Bethlehem, and swore he would resist the authorities of the United States, let the consequences be what they might. He was told such a course would ruin himself and family, and be the destruction of his property, to which he replied that his father had fought against the stamp act, and he would resist the tax law which was supported by none but tories and the friends of government. At last he was prevailed upon to promise to meet the Mar-

shal at Bethlehem, but could not be induced to say that he would submit or surrender himself. Seeing that nothing further could be accomplished there, the officers took their leave. As they left the house the people set up a shout and hurrahd for "Liberty." The Marshal now continued on his rounds. He procured a constable to show him where Adam Stephen, Herman Hartman, and Daniel Everly, for whom he had warrants, lived. Having arrested these persons he and his party returned to Bethlehem, where they arrived on the evening of March 6. Bethlehem was his headquarters, and here he had his prisoners confined.

Bethlehem, the place of confinement of the Marshal's prisoners, was such an important point at that day it will not do to pass it by with a mere mention of its name, but deserves something more. It stands on the north bank of the Lehigh, Northampton county, twelve miles above where the river empties into the Delaware. Here was made the first permanent settlement of the Moravians in North America. The first tree was felled on the spot where Bethlehem stands Dec. 22, 1740, by a small party from Nazareth. The cold was intense, the snow lay deep on the ground; and through the winter they encountered many privations and hardships. By the opening of spring a small log house was completed. On September 8, 1741, the corner-stone of a second, and much more commodious, house, was laid with interesting religious ceremonies. The first house stood until 1823, when it was torn down to make room for the Eagle Hotel stables; but the second has weathered the storms of nearly one hundred and sixty years, and still stands as a monument of the founding of Bethlehem. The first tree to build the first house was cut down by David Nitschman, who was born in Moravia, September 18, 1676, and died at Bethlehem, April 14, 1758. He was the first bishop of the brethren in America, and officiated at the laying of the corner-stone of the second building in 1741.

A recent writer speaking of this interesting building says: "Here, as in a common home, lived, side-by-side, the artisan and man of leisure—a little company met together from the

various walks of life, self-denying and devoted men, actuated by one spirit, and that the spirit of mutual love for Christ. Here lived for a number of years the elders of the congregation, its bishops and ministers. Here they met in conference to deliberate on the condition of the Lord's work in their midst, and abroad among the Indian tribes. Its walls have echoed to the voice of Zinzendorf,⁶ and, for fifteen years was the home of that great and good man, the worthy Bishop Spangenberg.⁶ In the little hall on the second floor, the place of worship for the congregation as late as 1751, Spangenberg presided on two occasions at interviews with deputations from the rude tribes of Wyoming Valley.⁷ Nanticokes and Shawanese, dressed in all their savage finery of feathers and painted deerskin, had come to see the home of the intrepid missionary, whose lonely canoe they had encountered on the upper waters of the Susquehanna, to smoke the friendly pipe, and assure him of their good-will in a covenant of peace and mutual friendship."

⁶ Count Zinzendorf, founder of the Moravian Colony north of the Lehigh, and descended of a noble Austrian family, was born at Dresden, Saxony, May 26, 1700. He was educated at Halle and the University of Wittenberg, and afterward spent some time in traveling. He was married in 1732 to the Countess Von Reuss, and became a convert to the Moravian faith shortly afterward. He landed at New York, December 2, 1741, reaching Philadelphia the 10th, and Bethlehem the 24th. He immediately became an object of general interest and was recognized as the head of the Moravian movement lately initiated in the province. In June, 1742, he organized the Moravian congregation at Bethlehem, and preached his farewell sermon at Philadelphia, December 31, leaving the same evening for New York to embark for Europe, where he died May 9, 1760. He was accompanied to America by his daughter Benigna.

⁶ Augustus Gottlieb Spangenberg, a bishop of the *Unitas Fratrum*, or Moravian Church, was born at Klettenberg, Prussia, July 15, 1704, and died at Bershelsdorf, Saxony, September 18, 1792. He graduated at Jena, where he later became a professor, and also at Halle. In 1735 he led the first Moravian colonists to Georgia. Having been appointed to preside over the Moravian Churches in America, he was raised to the episcopacy in 1744 and arrived at Bethlehem, Pa., the same year. In 1760 he was recalled to Europe to take a seat in the Supreme Board of the Church over which body he presided twenty-three years. He may justly be called the founder of the Moravian Church in America. He was a learned theologian, a man of great power, and a writer of many historical and theological works.

⁷ The Wyoming Valley, so famous in history and song, lies along the Susquehanna, and spreads about Wilkesbarre, the county seat of Luzerne. In it took place the bloody massacre of its inhabitants by Indians, in 1778, and avenged in 1779 by an army under General Sullivan. Campbell's "Gertrude of Wyoming" has made this valley almost as famous as the Vale of Cashmiers.

Bethlehem was originally intended as a place of rendezvous for the missionaries among the Delaware and Mohican Indians, which it held for twenty years, but, at the end of that time, became the seat of the Moravian congregation, organized by Count Zinzendorf. A school for girls was opened as early as 1749, but the boarding school was not commenced until 1785, and is still in operation.

During the Revolutionary War Bethlehem was often visited by American troops, and upon more than one occasion the brethren were sufferers from military exactions. On the retreat of Washington through New Jersey, December, 1776, Lee's division, under the command of General Sullivan, after crossing the Delaware, came to this place, where it encamped on the 17th, and La Fayette spent some time there to recover from the wound received at Brandywine.

In the spring of 1778, the single Sisters presented to Count Pulaski an elegant embroidered banner, which was borne at the head of his regiment until he fell at Savannah, 1779. Bethlehem was also visited by the Baron De Kalb, September, 1777. Hospitals were established there for the sick and wounded of the army, and it was also made a depot for provisions; and, in fact, during the whole war it was an important point in military operations. Washington styled the weaving department of Sisters House, "the first domestic manufactories of the land," and from there supplied himself and wife with articles of wearing apparel.

The situation of Bethlehem is beautiful and romantic in the extreme, and nature and art combined have rendered it one of the most charming spots in the country. It has grown into a town of some 10,000 inhabitants, and become an important business centre. Two railroads and a canal give the inhabitants great facilities for trade, and manufactories are rapidly growing up around it. The influx of strangers has done away with much of the exclusive Moravian impress formerly stamped upon the town, but the spirit of their institutions still prevails to a great extent, and may be said to be the governing influence.

The arrest of the persons for whom warrants were issued, and their confinement at Bethlehem by the Marshal, caused unusual excitement throughout the country. It created great indignation in the disaffected districts of Northampton and Bucks, and was considered an act of tyranny and oppression on the part of the government. As soon as it became known the arrests were made, the leaders of the opposition to the law determined to rescue them, if possible. For the purpose of consulting on the subject, a meeting was called at the public house of Conrad Marks', Milford, Bucks county, on March 7. Notices were carried around the evening before and left at the houses of those known to be friendly to the movement. By ten o'clock a number of people had assembled, and considerable excitement was manifested. The general sentiment was in favor of immediate organization and marching to Bethlehem to take the prisoners from the hands of the Marshal. The crowd was formed in a company, and John Fries elected captain. They were variously armed; some with guns, others with swords and pistols, while those with less belligerent feelings, carried clubs. Subsequently, when Fries was examined before Judge Peters, he said his "motive in going to Bethlehem to rescue the prisoners was not from personal attachment, or regard for any of the persons who had been arrested, but proceeded from a general aversion to the law, and an intention to impede and prevent its execution." This reason, however, hardly explains their course, under the circumstances. Their plan was first to march to Millarstown and thence to Bethlehem.

The people of Northampton, meanwhile, had also taken action in reference to a rescue of the prisoners. A meeting to

* Conrad Marks' tavern was in Milford township, Bucks county, near where the four corners of Bucks, Montgomery, Berks and Lehigh come together. His petition for license, in the Quarter Sessions office, was to August term, 1796, in which he states he had removed to the well-known tavern on the Magunshey (Macungie) road in said township of Milford, formerly occupied by George Horlacker," also that the house had been "kept as such above forty years." His endorsers were David Spinner and George Horlacker. For many years the house was known as Geary's tavern.

consult on the subject was called at the tavern of Martin Ritter,* to meet at 10 o'clock, on the morning of March 7. Notice was also given for two or three companies of light horse to meet there at the same time, one of which was commanded by Captain Jarrett."

At the hour appointed a considerable number of persons were on the ground, and much noise, confusion and excitement prevailed. Upon the meeting being organized, and a conference had about the matter, that had brought them together, it was unanimously resolved to march for Bethlehem without delay. The strength of the party which marched for that place we have no means of knowing, as the records do not give it. Soon after starting they selected a commander, the choice falling upon Andrew Shiffert. There were a few present who questioned the propriety of the movement, but the general voice was so nearly unanimous in its favor, their advice was not listened to. The excitement ran high, and the multitude clamored to be led to the rescue of their friends in the hands of the Federal authorities. They did not look at the consequences that might recoil upon themselves, nor did they care at that particular moment, for they were burning under a sense of real or imagined wrong. They were blind to the nature of the step they were taking, and deaf to the voice of reason. The multitude believed, in case they should succeed in rescuing the prisoners, the matter would end there. Or, if it did cross the minds of the most far-seeing that such indignity to the government might be taken notice of, and troops ordered there to capture the guilty, it was not supposed, for a moment, the authorities would be able to do anything with them. With this feeling the march was taken up for Gunes' tavern, three miles from Bethlehem, where some confederates

* We are not able to fix the locality of Martin Ritter's tavern. We thought, at first, it was on the site of the present Rittersville, four miles from Bethlehem, on the road to Allentown. But this was impossible as the place of meeting of the Northampton insurgents was on the south side of the Lehigh, while Rittersville is on the north.

¹⁰ The same Captain Jarrett previously mentioned. His military, on this occasion, was a regularly organized volunteer company.

were expected to join them. Here they resumed the march for the bridge that crosses the Lehigh at South Bethlehem."¹¹

¹¹ The South Bethlehem *Star*, published a few years ago, the following account of the establishing of a ferry and the subsequent building of a bridge across the Lehigh at Bethlehem, by which the insurgents crossed: "The first public means of crossing the Lehigh was a ferry at the same place where the old Lehigh bridge now crosses the river. It was opened on March 11, 1743, and the man who first paddled passengers across the new ferry was Adam Schaus. Ferriage was at first, for a horse and rider, 3d. In 1745 the use of the ferry was free to all who lived in Bethlehem or delt there. Travelers were expected to pay if they would, but in case they objected they were not to be constrained. Improvements gradually crept in and 1750 wharves were constructed. Eight years thereafter a rope was introduced which rendered a passage across the river a much less serious matter than heretofore. At last came a bridge in 1794. John Schropp, warden, was empowered by an Act of Assembly to undertake the enterprise and to associate stockholders with himself. That first bridge was built of hemlock, was uncovered and cost \$7800. In 1816 this bridge was removed and a more substantial structure put in its place. The latter bridge was also uncovered. In April, 1827, the present Bethlehem Bridge Company was organized. In 1841 the second bridge across the Lehigh was swept away by a freshet, after which the present covered one was constructed. After the great freshet of 1862 the present bridge had to be partially rebuilt, a portion of it having been carried away by the waters."





JUDGE WILLIAM HENRY

OF NORTHAMPTON COUNTY.





The Fries Rebellion.

CHAPTER VI.

Rescue of the Prisoners at Bethlehem.

Fries and his friends received word, the night before, that the Northampton people, opposed to the law, also intended to make an effort to take the prisoners from the hands of the Marshal. In the morning, Conrad Marks sent his son to Ritter's tavern, to learn what movement was on foot at that place. In the meantime the march was commenced for Millarstown, and when they had gone three or four miles on the road, young Marks was met returning. He informed them the Northampton people were already in motion, a large party having left Ritter's before his arrival; that it was not worth while for them to go, as a sufficient number was on the march to accomplish what they had in view. Upon learning this some were in favor of turning back, but Conrad Marks and John Fries advised they should go at least to Bethlehem to see what was going on there. The march was now resumed. Daniel Fries, son of John, says that his father started for Bethlehem mounted, but, when near old John Cline's, the animal cut its foot with the cork of his shoe and was disabled. Daniel was with him, and, as the horse was of no further service on the road, Fries sent his son back with it and continued the march on foot. They passed by Ritter's tavern, and followed the route of the Northampton contingent which had preceded them, overtaking and joining them at the south end of the bridge over the Lehigh at South Bethlehem.¹ The whole

¹ South Bethlehem is on the south bank of the Lehigh opposite Bethlehem. Here was the Crown Inn, the first licensed house on the Lehigh that rose to the dignity of a tavern, and on the site of it is the Union Railroad Station. The house was built in 1745 and licensed in June, 1746. The "Crown" played an important role in Colonial days. Around the site of this old hostelry has grown a town of fifteen thousand inhabitants; it is the seat of Lehigh University and here is located great iron works. Bethlehem and South Bethlehem are still connected by a wooden bridge that crosses the Lehigh at about the same place as the old one of '99.

command numbered about one hundred and forty men, including two companies of riflemen and one of mounted men, the latter being armed with broad swords. They presented quite a martial appearance. Their march through the thickly populated country swelled their ranks by the addition of a number, attracted by curiosity, who followed after to see what would take place, without any intention of taking part in the proceedings. They were neutrals.

We have already said the Marshal returned to Bethlehem with his prisoners the night of March 6, and confined them in the Sun tavern.² As the Marshal passed through the country, on his return, he heard a rumor that an attempt would be made to rescue the prisoners, but he did not conceive such a thing possible, supposing somebody, as a matter of amusement, had raised the story to alarm him. Upon reaching Bethlehem, however, the rumor was confirmed, and he was convinced a movement of the kind was on foot by a band of

² A public house has been kept on the spot where the Sun tavern stands for 140 years. The expediency of erecting a house of entertainment at Bethlehem was first considered and the location fixed upon, in July, 1754, but delay prevented its completion until 1758. Down to this time travelers were accommodated at "The Crown" on the south bank of the Lehigh, built 1743, and converted into a farm house in 1794. Chastellux, a French gentleman traveling in America near the close of the last century says of the "Sun:" "This tavern was built at the expense of the Society of Moravian Brethren whom it served as a magazine, and is very handsome, and spacious. The person who keeps it is only the cashier, and obliged to render an account to the administrators. As we had already dined we only drank tea, but ordered breakfast for the next morning at 10 o'clock." An English gentleman traveling in this country at that period also visited Bethlehem and put up at the Sun tavern. He afterward translated the work of Chastellux, and in it, makes the following note in reference to this tavern: "This inn for its external appearances, and its interior accommodations, is equal to the best of the large inns in England, which, indeed, it very much resembles in many respects. The first time I was in Bethlehem, in company with my friends, Major Pierce Butler, Mr. Thomas Elliott and Mr. Charles Pinckney, Carolina gentlemen, we remained here two or three days, and were constantly supplied with venison, moose, game, and the most delicious red and yellow bellied trout, the highest flavored wild strawberries, the most luxurious asparagus and the best vegetables, in short, I ever saw; and notwithstanding the difficulty of procuring good wine and spirits at that period throughout the continent, we were here regaled with rum and brandy, of the best quality, and exquisite old Port and Madeira." The present condition and appearance of the Sun tavern are in strong contrast compared with a century ago. It is excelled by few, if any, public house outside the large cities, and the accommodations are of the best. It is frequently alleged Lafayette put up at the Sun tavern, while recovering from the wound received at Brandywine, 1777, but this is an error. He occupied the house lately owned by Ambrose Rauch, on Main street, torn down 1872. The Marquis was driven in a carriage from Bristol, on the Delaware, to Bethlehem, a distance of sixty miles.

armed men. The prisoners arrested in Lehigh township were released upon their own bonds, with good securities for their appearance, but the others were held in custody.

The information, that an attempt at rescue would be made, naturally gave the Marshal great uneasiness, and he proceeded to take such steps as were deemed necessary to prevent it. He held a consultation with Judge William Henry, Mr. Eyerley, the commissioner, Mr. Balliott, Joseph Horsfield,* a justice of the peace at Bethlehem, and General Brown.⁴ He had received instructions before leaving Philadelphia to call out a *posse comitatus* in case it should be found necessary, but was forbidden to use an armed force. He made a demand upon Judge Henry for armed men, but as the latter had received similar instructions, and there could not be found any authority authorizing it, the requisition was refused. It was therefore decided to call such force as they were authorized to accept, and, accordingly, summoned a civil posse. Twenty men were called from Bethlehem and Easton, but only eighteen responded, arriving between ten and eleven in the forenoon. We have not been able to get the names of all, but among them were William Barnett, John Barnett, Christian Winters, Christian Roths and Philip Schlaugh. The prisoners were removed upstairs to a room thought to be more secure. As General Brown was a person of influence in the county, the Marshal requested him to command at Bethlehem and lend the assistance of his counsel, but he declined on account of having been absent so long from his family. In the meantime an officer was sent to arrest a clergyman named Eyer-

* Joseph Horsfield was a prominent citizen of Northampton, and justice of the peace many years at Bethlehem. He was the youngest child of Timothy and Mary Horsfield, who settled in Long Island, 1749, and removed to Bethlehem, 1750. He married a niece of the celebrated Anthony Benezet, Philadelphia, whose mother was a great court beauty during the reign of Louis XIV. He was a witness on the trial of Fries for the prosecution. He died at Bethlehem, 1834, at the age of 84 years.

⁴ General Brown was a descendant of an immigrant who settled at "Craig's Settlement," Allen township, Northampton county, about 1735. He was prominent in his generation, and played an important part in the county during the Revolutionary struggle. Robert Brown, of that section, was a prominent man of his day and an officer in the Continental army.

man^a and one John Fox, both active in opposing the law, and who were thought to be too dangerous to go at large. They were taken and brought in without opposition. The proceedings becoming known in the surrounding country, a large number of people came to witness a conflict, which, it was supposed, could not be avoided.

About eleven o'clock, a Mr. Dixon, who arrived from Emaus, informed the Marshal he had seen a number of persons assembled at Ritter's tavern, under arms, some mounted, others on foot, who were about to march for Bethlehem; and also saw others on the road. This was the first positive information that an armed party was actually coming to attempt a rescue of the prisoners. In about half an hour two men, one armed with a smooth bore gun, the other with a rifle, arrived at the Sun, dismounted in the yard, came quietly into the house, and placed themselves by the side of each other opposite the door. The Marshal, and some of the people who were collected, inquired the reason of their coming there armed, when, after some hesitation, they replied they "had come upon a shooting frolic." Upon being questioned as to what they intended to shoot, one of them evaded a reply by saying they wanted to see what was best for the country. They were then told to withdraw, and not appear in arms to obstruct the process of the United States. To this they replied they were freemen, and had a right to go where they pleased. They were supposed to be of the insurgent force, and, as they would probably come straggling in, it was thought best to secure them in detail. They were accordingly arrested, their arms taken from them, and they were taken up stairs and confined in a chamber. Shortly after three other mounted men arrived in uniform, at the head of whom was Shankwyler, who had refused to submit to an arrest the day before. The Marshal asked him if he had come to surrender himself, but he replied

^a Among the prisoners released at Bethlehem was Jacob Eyerman, a clergyman residing in Hamilton township, Northampton county, recently arrived from Germany. He was one of the most active in stirring up opposition to the house tax law, only second in influence to John Fries, and continued to preach to his congregation until his tongue was silenced by arrest. After his release he fled to the State of New York, where he was arrested and brought back. He was tried, found guilty of conspiracy; sentenced to one year with a fine of \$50, and to give security for one year for his good behavior.

he came to meet his accuser. They gave no indication of creating a disturbance and mingled peaceably with others assembled. Information was now brought in that there was an armed force at the Lehigh bridge, on the march for the tavern. A consultation was held, and it was deemed best to send a deputation down to hold a conference with them, to learn their intention. It was agreed to send a delegation of four upon this duty, two Federalists and two anti-Federalists. The men selected were John Mulhallon,* William Barnett, Christian Roths and Isaac Hartzell, gentlemen of standing and influence in the county. They received no particular instructions, and were only charged to prevail upon the armed force not to come into town.

The deputation rode down through the main street of Bethlehem, crossed the Lehigh to the south bank, and proceeded about a half mile beyond the bridge, where they met a party of armed horsemen, whom they learned were from the neighborhood of Millarstown. These belonged to the Northampton contingent. Upon inquiring for the commanding officer, they were told they had no officers but were all commanders. The committee then told them the object of their visit, and used every persuasion to induce them to relinquish their march to Bethlehem. They explained to them the probable consequences of the rash step they were about to take; that they would be resisting the laws of the United States in rescuing the prisoners, and the Government would surely punish them for it. All they said seemed to have but little or no effect. While Judge Mulhallon and Mr. Barnett were talking with these people in front, Christian Roths went toward the rear to use his influence in that quarter. One of the men said to him, "We don't know you;" whereupon he told them in reply, that whether they knew him or not, they would thank him for the advice he had given them. Another pointed his gun at him. This did not alarm Roths, who mildly said, "Little man, consider what you are about; don't be too much in a hurry." While they were holding this parley a company

* John Mulhallon, called "Judge" Mulhallon, and probably Associate Judge at one time, was appointed the first Prothonotary for Lehigh county, when it was cut off from Northampton.

of armed riflemen came up. They were likewise informed of the wish of the Marshal, but they gave it no more heed than the others.

The march of the insurgents was now resumed and they continued to the bridge where another halt was made. The committee here held another parley with them, endeavoring, by all possible means, to induce them not to go over into the town. They now said that the Marshal had two of their men prisoners, who had gone to Bethlehem under arms, and they intended to set them free. They appeared to be alarmed at the idea of the prisoners being taken to Philadelphia for trial. While admitting they should be punished, if they had done wrong, they must be tried in Northampton county. When the committee saw the insurgents were determined to proceed, they suggested it would be better to send three or four men over as a deputation to confer with the Marshal. To this they agreed, and three of their number were appointed to go. Afraid lest these men should also be made prisoners, they stipulated with William Barnett that he should return them safely. The two committees then crossed the river to Bethlehem, and together proceeded to the Sun tavern. They were taken before the Marshal and had a conference with him. Upon inquiring the reason of so many armed men coming there, they replied they came to prevent him taking the prisoners to Philadelphia to be tried. He told them that that could not be, and advised them to go to their companions and persuade them to return to their homes. They requested that the two men, who had been made prisoners in the morning, should be released, which was done and their arms delivered to them. As the committee had promised, they now returned with these men to the south side of the river to deliver them to their companions.

We last took leave of John Fries and his friends on their march from Conrad Marks' tavern by the way of Millarstown to Bethlehem. They were a little in the rear of the Northampton contingent, and arrived at the bridge while the committee of citizens were gone to the tavern with the men deputed to confer with the Marshal. They did not halt any length of

time on the south bank of the river, but pushed across and continued on to the tavern, where the prisoners were confined. Meanwhile, the committee of conference, on the part of the Marshal, had started on their return accompanied by the two released prisoners and their three friends. When they reached the lower part of the village, they met the force of John Fries marching up the main street. They stopped him to hold a parley, and endeavored to prevail upon him and his men not to continue their march up into the town; but they disregarded their appeal and said they were determined to go on. One of the men, supposed to have been Fries, said, "This is the third day that I am out. I had a fight yesterday, and I mean to have one to-day if they do not let the prisoners clear." They now resumed the march. The force consisted of two companies of riflemen, and one of mounted men, numbering in all about one hundred and forty. The horsemen marched two abreast armed with drawn swords. The footmen carried rifles, at a trail, in single file. One of the companies was commanded by a Captain Staeler, and wore tri-colored cockades on their hats. Fries marched in front of the riflemen and was apparently in command

The appearance of this large armed force, so close at hand, created great confusion and excitement, not only at the tavern but throughout the town. A conflict between them and the Marshal's posse was now thought inevitable. The inhabitants and strangers in the town flocked around the scene of action to watch the course of events. The Marshal had a force of less than twenty men to protect eighteen prisoners, who were merely placed in different rooms in the tavern, without being further restrained of their liberty. When the insurgents were known to be coming, the prisoners were told their friends were at hand prepared to take them away, but they did not wish to be rescued. The force arrived about 1 o'clock in the day; marched into the yard in front of the tavern; halted, the horsemen dismounting, and the riflemen passing around the house drew up in the rear of the horses and rested on their arms. The men kept well in ranks, and appeared to be under good control. The Marshal doubled his guard over the

prisoners and stationed two at the bottom and two at the top of the stairs, armed with pistols. Fries went into the tavern, accompanied by two of his men, and requested the sentinel at the foot of the stairway to let him go up to see the Marshal. Word was sent up to Colonel Nichols, who came forward and told the guard to let Captain Fries pass up. When he came to the Marshal, Fries informed him he had come for the prisoners, and demanded their release. The Marshal replied this was out of his power, but if he were determined to take them, he must get them the best way he could. Soon after Fries and his force arrived, Captain Jarrett came up, and the men saluted him with cheers. He had been to Philadelphia to surrender himself and be discharged on bail, and had just returned. He had an interview with the Marshal who requested him to get the men to withdraw. This he promised to do, but he either had no influence or did not choose to exercise it. He remained about there some two hours, but took no steps to quell the disturbance. After the interview with the Marshal, Fries returned to the guard and told his followers the result of it. Upon learning this they became quite violent and expressed a determination to have the prisoners at every risk. They abused Eyerley, the commissioner, and all who had assisted him, and towards them appeared to be more enraged than at the Marshal.

The insurgents now prepared to take the prisoners by force if they should not be given up peaceably. Fries told his men that four or five sentinels had to be passed, and begged them not to fire until the Marshal's posse had fired upon them; he would go on before them and expected to get the first blow. He cautioned them, a second time, not to fire first, and promised to give the word as soon as he was fired upon, when they must help themselves. He then gave the command, and his men followed toward the tavern. They came on with a rush and succeeded in getting into the entry in considerable numbers, where they were met by the Marshal's posse. A struggle took place between them, which resulted in the posse clearing the entry of the enemy. Esquire Horsfield came down stairs while the contest was going on, and, seeing that

great excitement prevailed, he made his way through the crowd up stairs again to the landlord, Mr. Levering,⁷ and prevailed upon him to close the bar, as liquor stimulated the disturbance. This repulse maddened the crowd, and they returned to the charge with greater fury than before, yelling and uttering savage shrieks. They struck the butts of their rifles on the ground, and fairly jumped with rage. They came to the door and a number entered and filled the hall. Those who remained outside pointed their rifles up at the windows to intimidate, and one, who entered, thrust the muzzle of his gun up the stairway, threatening to fire. They shouted their determination to have the prisoners. These proceedings caused great consternation among the Marshal's posse, who began to grow alarmed for their own safety.

Philip Schlaugh was so much frightened he mounted his horse when the second rush was made, and rode for Easton as fast as his animal could carry him. Esquire Horsfield begged the Marshal "for God's sake" to deliver up the prisoners, and worked his way down stairs to be ready to make his escape. The Marshal and his friends, up stairs at this time in charge of the prisoners, consulted with Judge Henry and others as to what was best to be done. He was advised to surrender the prisoners to Fries. This he refused to do, but said he would march them to Philadelphia, and if the mob thought proper to take them from him, on the way, it would be their act, not his, and he told them to prepare immediately to start for the city. Several refused to go, saying they would not thus endanger their lives, but if he would suffer them to return to their homes they would meet him in Philadelphia on Monday or Tuesday following. Fries was still demanding their release and threats of bodily harm were made against Eyerley, Henry and others, in case the prisoners were not given up. The Marshal, considering the lives of these gentlemen in

⁷ Abraham Levering was the landlord of the Sun tavern at the time of the rescue of the prisoners, and the fifth in succession. He was a son of John and Susan Levering, Nazareth, and born December, 1757. His wife, Christiana, a daughter of Lewis Cassler, Lititz, was the popular hostess of the tavern for nine years. Levering entered upon the management June 1st, 1790; retired from the tavern in June, 1799, and died in Bethlehem, 1835.

danger, rather than expose them to injury, concluded to deliver the prisoners to Fries, and they were released and turned over to him. In a few minutes there was not an armed man on the ground, while the people of the town and neighborhood, who had collected as witnesses of the proceedings, quietly dispersed and returned to their homes. The contest was bloodless and the insurgents won.





The Fries Rebellion.

CHAPTER VII.

The President Issues His Proclamation.

Immediately, after the rescue of the prisoners at Bethlehem, John Fries returned to his home in Milford township, but far from satisfied with the part he had taken in the affair. The excitement having subsided and reflection assumed its wonted sway, he doubted the propriety of his course, and began to have fears that he and his friends had gone beyond legal resistance. Like every man, who places himself in the wrong, he was anxious to unburden his mind by talking with others upon the subject, in the hope of justifying his conduct. For this purpose he went to see John Jamison,¹ an old acquaintance, two days after the occurrence, to whom he gave a full account of the affair at Bethlehem, and the part he took in it. He threw the blame upon the Germans, who, he said, he could do nothing with, as they had gotten the idea into their heads. General Washington was opposed to the law, and therefore they need not allow it to be carried into execution.

An effort was now made to harmonize matters so the assessments could be taken, thus putting an end to the disturbance that had so long agitated this and neighboring counties. It was agreed among the leading men in the disaffected districts of Bucks the proper course would be to meet and choose a committee from the three counties. For this purpose a meeting was called at the tavern of Conrad Marks, Monday, March 15, which some 200 people attended from the three counties. A committee of four from each county was appointed, with authority to consider the situation, and report what was best to be done under the circumstances. We have not been able

¹ John Jamison was a descendant of William Jamison, who settled in Richland township, in the neighborhood of Quakertown about 1730. He was a farmer and of no particular prominence.

to procure the names of all on the committee, but have several from this county; John Jamison, George Kline,² Daniel Roberts,³ Conrad Marks, Dr. Baker, a man named Davis and Captain Jarrett. They advised the people to desist from further opposition to the assessors and other officers in the execution of their duties, and enjoined upon them to give due submission to the laws of their country. This seemed to be the sentiment of all present at the meeting, and no dissent was experienced. The people of Lower Milford were now in favor of having the assessments made, but, Mr. Roberts, upon being consulted, was not willing they should choose an assessor, but if Mr. Clark, who had not yet given up his commission, would take the rates, it would answer every purpose. A second meeting was advertised to be held at George Mitchel's tavern on March 25, to take the sense of the people upon the subject of permitting Clark to make the assessments. Fries was at the meeting held at Conrad Marks, and, as it does not appear he took any part in the proceedings, he probably quietly acquiesced with others in the peaceable measures adopted. Upon this occasion he and Mitchel had some conversation on the subject, when he admitted his former resistance to the law, a fact he never denied. He now expressed a willingness to give in his submission, and allow the law to be enforced. Apparently wishing to make some amends for his former harsh treatment of the officers, he told Jacob Huber that his house should not be assessed until he had given the assessors a dinner, and that if he were not at home when they came his son would be there to provide for them. With this the opposition to the law in Milford ended, and, from that time forward to his arrest, there was no better ordered citizen in the county than John Fries. He returned to his usual occupa-

² The Kline family were sympathizers with Fries in his opposition to the house tax law, and Jacob Kline, Sr., and three others of the name were arrested for treason. Jacob Kline was present at the meeting at Mitchel's tavern and was then well disposed.

³ Daniel Roberts was a descendant of Edward Roberts, who, with his wife, settled near Quakertown, 1716. She was a daughter of Everard and Elizabeth Bolton, who settled at Cheltenham, Montgomery county, 1682. The ancestry of the Boltons is traced back to the Lord of Bolton, the lineal representative of the Saxon Earls of Murcia. The late Judge Roberts, of Doylestown, was a descendant of Edward Roberts.